

## KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

*The man who could change it all*

## PEGG AND EGG

*The story of a long-term bromance*

## MONEY FOR NOTHING

*Why do fighters have to pay for their belts?*

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# BOXING

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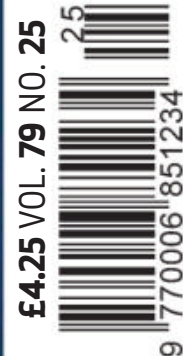
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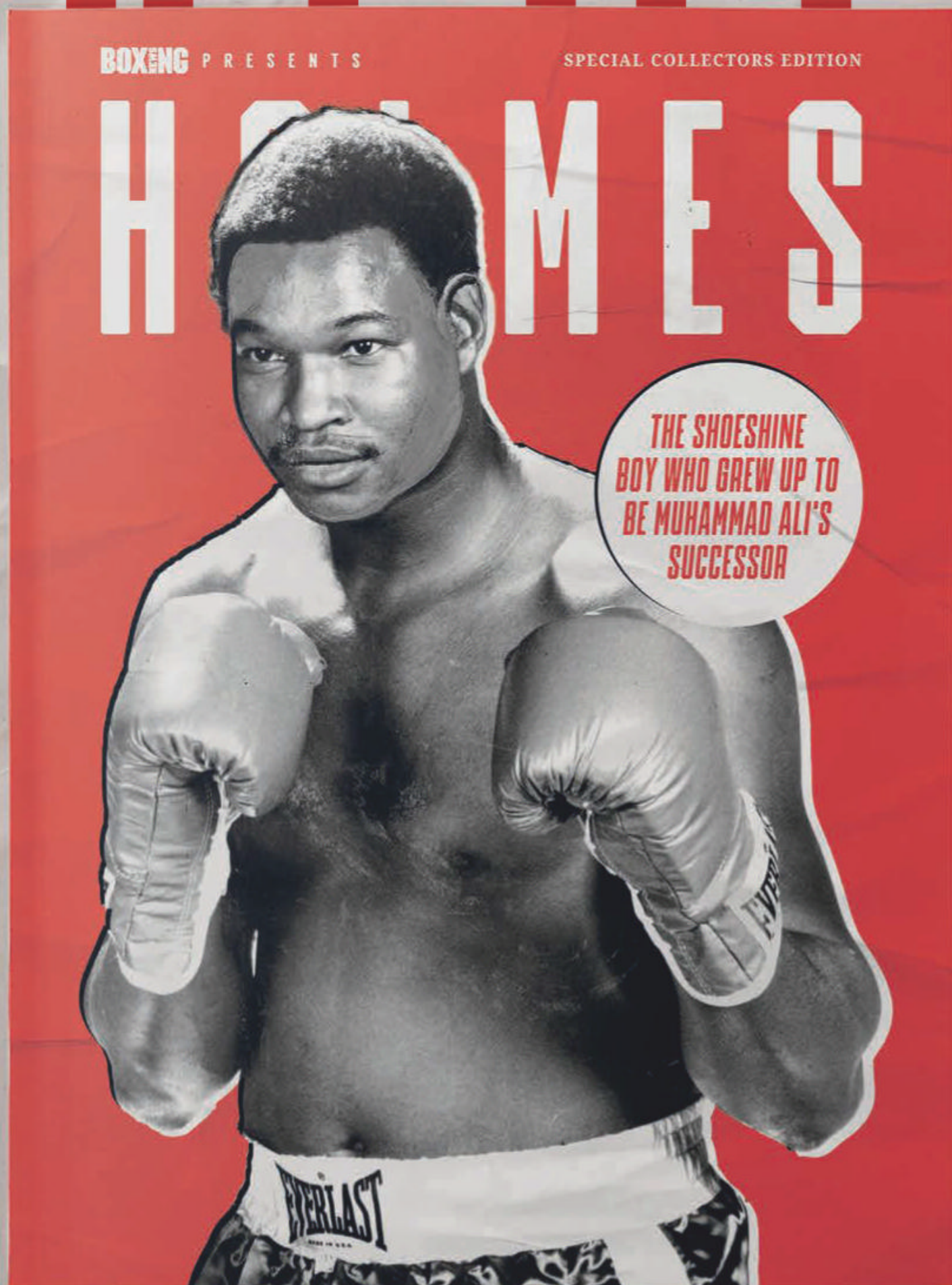


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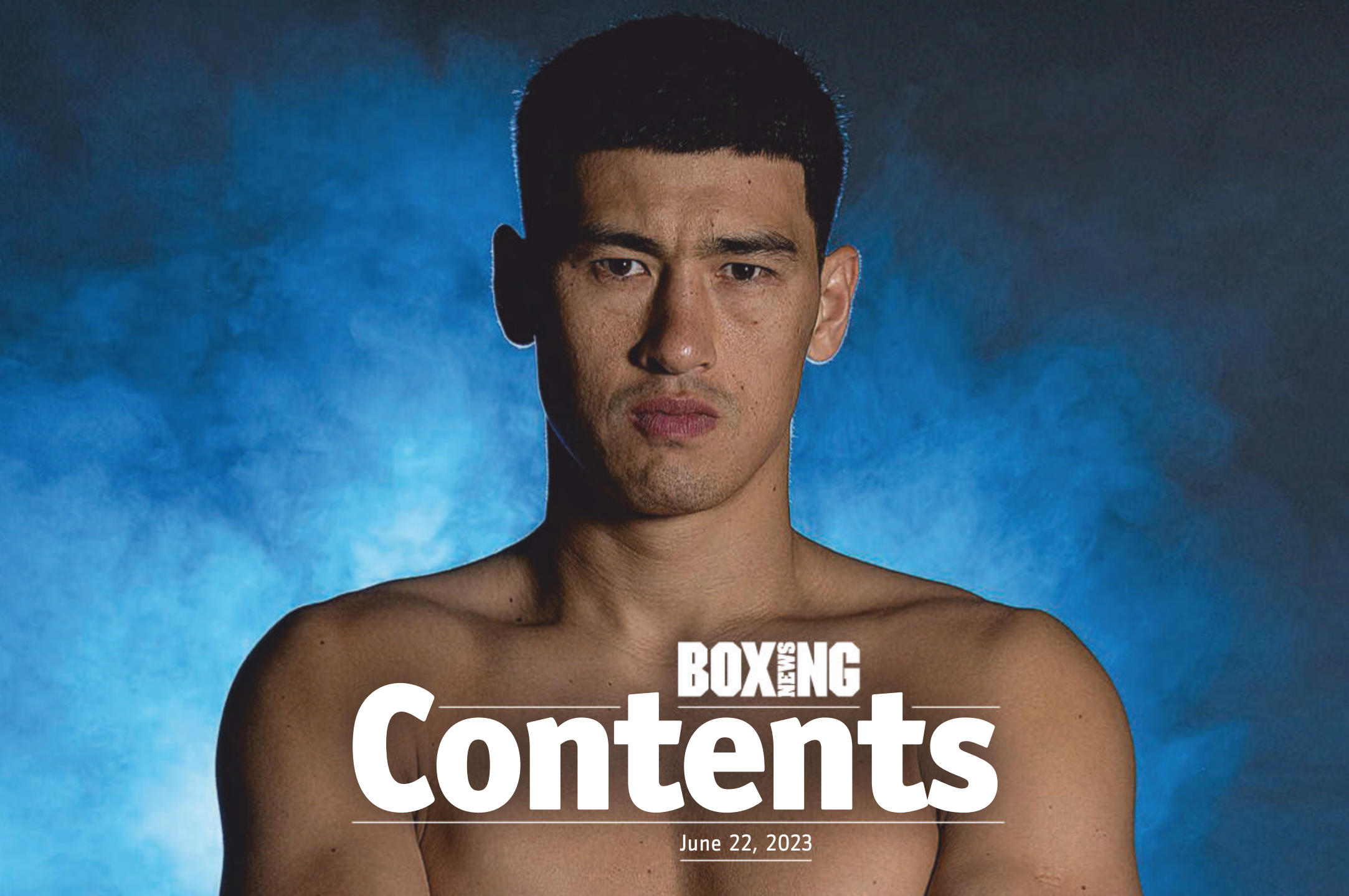
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# BOXING Contents

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## 20

### BIVOL: I JUST WANT TO FIGHT

The light-heavyweight believes Canelo and Beterbiev are running scared

#### ESSENTIAL READING

- >> 4 **END THE 'FOUR-BELT ERA'**  
Why are we still facilitating the chaos?
- >> 8 **MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN**  
Bunce: The Pegg & Eggington bromance
- >> 16 **MAN OF INFLUENCE**  
We talk exclusively to Amer Abdallah, the face of Skills Challenge in Saudi
- >> 22 **RETURN TO CANASTOTA**  
Tris Dixon goes back to his special place
- >> 26 **PROGRAIS STUTTERS**  
Our ringside verdict from New Orleans

## 26



#### BEST OF THE REST

- >> 10 **WELL SAID, ERROL SPENCE**  
Concerns raised ahead of Crawford fight
- >> 12 **THE HARDEST GOODBYE**  
Retiring in the social media age ain't easy
- >> 14 **YOU CAN CALL HIM AL**  
Sweet D and his enduring relationship
- >> 28 **HOT AND STICKY NIGHT**  
Clarke beats podgy Wach inside York Hall
- >> 29 **ASH THE BASH IS BACK**  
Lane notches sizeable upset in Brentwood
- >> 34 **TSZU THE TERROR**  
Tim impresses once more in Australia
- >> 36 **EDGAR BERLANGA**  
The pressure is off ahead of Quigley test
- >> 38 **IOKA-FRANCO PART II**  
Can Japan's hero roll back the years?
- >> 40 **ANOTHER DAY TO CHERISH**  
The Haringey Box Cup delivers yet again

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# BOXING





There are so many reasons why the sanctioning bodies are bad for the sport but, for the boxers, there's one big shiny redeeming feature that trumps them all



Cover photography  
ED MULHOLLAND/MATCHROOM



**Matt Christie**  
@MattCBoxingNews  
*Editor*

APOLOGIES for writing about this again. Bigger apologies go to my forehead, however, as I prepare to slam it against a brick wall for the umpteenth time. Errol Spence Jr calling out the sanctioning bodies for the fees they charge, while simultaneously showing off the shine on their belts, perfectly illustrated the paradoxical appeal of those ranking organisations. Spence was right to question where a whopping three per cent of his purse goes for the privilege of fighting for a belt (and when all four are on the line, that three per cent becomes 12) because it seems an awful lot and nobody really

seems to know. What can do is reel off a list of things it most certainly doesn't pay for. For example, it clearly isn't being used to pay honest and knowledgeable people to compile rankings, it's not adding to a pension pot for boxers, it's not being spent on the carrying out of background checks on the criminals they do business with nor is a penny going to charities like Ringside Charitable Trust. And judging by the state of those shapeless t-shirts that are pulled over the head of the winning boxer within a millisecond of victory being achieved, not much of it is being invested in merchandise. Anyone who has followed boxing for any length of time will know that having four sanctioning bodies in existence causes chaos. The boxers know it. The broadcasters know it. The promoters know it. The media know it. Yet they all keep the sanctioning bodies in business by facilitating their policies, rankings and belts. Spence did it when he clutched his selection of silverware for the

cameras. The broadcasters, meanwhile, harp on ad nauseum about undisputed and unification and what a wonderful occasion it is when all four belts are on the line in this 'four-belt era'. Very few members of the media have the desire (or intelligence) to recognise the consequences of such utter drivell. In consecutive weeks recently, we had matches for the 'world' super-lightweight title involving four different boxers. And that's the same division that went through a long and winding process to crown an undisputed champion not so long ago. So, if we had an undisputed champion as recently as 2022, one who didn't lose his title nor leave the weight class, why was he one of four 'world champions' 12 months later? The number jumps to five if you include the WBA 'regular' gong and six if you recognise the IBO too (as some broadcasters and promoters are starting to do with concerning regularity). But still, with a straight face, people will classify a division as 'unified' and its

# Head meets brick wall (again)

Photos: ESTHER LIN/SHOWTIME



**SHARP THINKING:**  
Spence is right to ask  
where his hard-earned  
money is going



**BELT UP:**  
Aesthetics aside,  
what is the point  
of all the belts?



leader as 'undisputed' while knowing that a dispute will cause a split very soon.

Boxing is such an appealing and simple sport at its core, it shouldn't be so difficult to understand, particularly as we strive to gain and retain audiences. The attention span of the fan is dwindling, new viewing habits are being formed, yet the paymasters continue to act like everyone understands the inane championship system.

I am puzzled every single time I hear a ring announcer reel off the belts that boxers have won during the introductions. 'The former WBO intercontinental champion, the former WBC world silver champion and the current WBA interim world champion...' What does all that really mean? And if I'm struggling to keep up, you can guarantee that Joe Bloggs lost interest long ago. Last week, I even heard Teofimo Lopez being described as the 'World Boxing Organisation linear world champion' by a reputable broadcaster. Seriously, what is a world-linear-world champion?

If you haven't looked for a while, take a nose at the rankings these gangs produce every month and ask yourself why they're all so different when they're all supposedly following the same results and form. In nearly every division, each sanctioning body will highly rank a little-known fighter who is unranked by their rival organisations. Imagine some

randomer who hadn't won a match at a decent level suddenly being ranked as the third best tennis player on the planet simply because their manager was in cahoots with the head of the sport. Imagine Worthing FC being rewarded with a spot in the semi-final of the FA Cup because they won the Sussex Senior Cup. And then imagine Worthing pulled off the mother of all shocks to win it and each player was charged a percentage of their wages for the pleasure. The equivalent of all the above is happening in boxing, all the time, and nobody even blinks. The sanctioning bodies are always welcome, folks. Everyone chuckles at their jokes and puts up with the stink like they're an incontinent relation at a family gathering. But unlike spending some time with dear old great grandpa, we do have a choice here.

It's worthwhile, too, to stick your head out of this boxing bubble and see how the rest of the world views these multiple championships. The days of boxers winning world titles gracing the back pages have long gone. How many fights with sanctioning body belts on the line take place every year – and how many of those are ever mentioned on the same news bulletins that will always update on football, tennis, cricket, rugby and athletics? The real world largely lost interest a long time ago because of the dilution – to the point that when a truly great matchup occurs, like Spence-

Terence Crawford, it gets ignored.

It's high time for change. Would Spence versus Crawford be any less appealing if it didn't have any belts on the line? Would Michael Buffer's announcement sound less grand if he didn't spend half an hour reeling off the various alphabet titles? Will the ring look uglier because the four controllers are not stood in the middle of it hoisting their belts aloft? Would the winner not having to then defend against an undeserving mandatory be unwelcome?

Most pertinently of all, will anyone of sane mind doubt that the winner is the best welterweight in the world because they're not simultaneously holding all four straps? But therein lies the biggest problem. The boxers love to win belts because they've been conditioned to believe they still mean something. Heck, I'd love to win a belt too. I've even got a replica Lonsdale Belt on my office wall... just next to the dent from my head. Yet I'll never pretend I was once a British champion and at least I know I got exactly what I paid for.

Spence asking questions is not exactly a game-changer but the fact he's at least started to wonder what point those shiny souvenirs serve should be championed. And most certainly, if he and Crawford opted not to fight for any of the belts and pocket a sizeable chunk of their purse instead, the real tipping point could be upon us.

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## LETTER OF THE WEEK

## WHAT A SHAMBLES AT HEAVYWEIGHT



TYSON FURY is calling out fighters from different sports, Oleksandr Usyk and Deontay Wilder have signed with a group in the Middle East, and Anthony Joshua is seemingly waiting on an offer from the same group to fight on what appears a fanciful promotion in December. In the meantime, us fans who were promised that 2023 would be "the year" are waiting for the supposed glamour division to actually stage a meaningful fight.

The situation is not laughable, it's pathetic, and highlights what a shambles the greedy heavyweights have become.

I realise I'm likely preaching to the converted here, but the longer that the sport is left to the money men to organise, the worse it will continue to get. What a shame, too, because the aforementioned bunch had all the ingredients required to create a truly great era.

**Harry Reynolds**

**A BAD NIGHT AT THE OFFICE**

BOB WILLIAMS is a great chap and a very good referee, but what was going through his head on June 9 at York Hall during Mark Chamberlain's bout against Marvin Demollari? Williams failed to acknowledge a knockdown, and then didn't address several damaging punches from Chamberlain after the call to stop boxing, more than one of which was an illegal blow to the back of the head. Then with Demollari stumbling around after a third knockdown (as if exiting the Dog and Duck after 12 pints) Williams encouraged him to box on! Mercifully an end was called shortly afterwards.

Poor Carl Frampton on commentary appeared genuinely shell-shocked by what he had witnessed. Steve Bunce called it an off night for the referee. I would much prefer if a referee is to be granted one of these, it is because the fight was stopped too early, not too late.

**Tim Farmer**

**NIGHT NIGHT, POPS**

I AGREE that boxing matches start too late at night. My son, who is 11, gets so bored waiting that he actually volunteers to go to bed!

**Carter King**

**DISGRACEFUL CONTENT**

BOXING NEWS giving four pages to Jake Paul (June 8) is a disgrace. This is a serious boxing magazine, not a comic. I have been reading *Boxing News* since 1977, I want to read about real boxers, not clowns like Paul. Do you not think he gets enough publicity as it is?

**Tom O'Toole**

**BRILLIANT CONTENT**

WHAT a brilliant article from Steve Bunce about Charlie Magri (June 8). What a great fighter Charlie was. Bunce is absolutely right - Charlie would be a superstar today. Lovely stuff all round.

**Mark Brooks**

**WAITING GAME:**  
When will Fury  
- and other top  
heavyweights  
- actually fight?

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## THE PANEL

### WAS ERROL SPENCE RIGHT TO QUESTION THE FEES CHARGED BY SANCTIONING BODIES?



**Russ Anber**

(Trainer/cutman)

I think it should be an absolute obligation of transparency of the governing bodies and full accountability on what is done with that. I understand that they do certain charitable work, but you can't just do it quietly and say we gave money to a hospital the other day. These sanctioning fees should be to help all fighters.



**Ben Damon**

(Australian commentator)

The fighters don't feel they are being adequately informed as to where the sanctioning bodies are spending their percentages. The fighters join the fans in their confusion and frustration over how the sanctioning bodies conduct their business and make their decisions. Greater transparency would be a step forward.



**Liam Smith**

(Former 154lbs belt-holder)

I do think so because there's no clarity where this money goes. It's a lot of money people are paying, and it's not really set up to help fighters. It's not like they help ex-fighters or fighters who have struggled or been injured. It's not like it gets given back in any way so I do think it's right to question. All this money doesn't just buy belts.



**Sunny Edwards**

(Flyweight belt-holder)

At the risk of biting the hand that feeds me it's probably a worthwhile question. We know about the percentages. We don't really know where it goes. Maybe that's not our jurisdiction, we are just the fighters that get in the ring, but it was definitely an interesting question to ask. Knowing that he needs to be paying three

### WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON THE CURRENT LACK OF ACTION FROM THE LEADING HEAVYWEIGHTS?

**Russ Anber**

There's only guy that's really causing all these problems and that's Tyson Fury. You have a champion like Oleksandr Usyk who has three belts who wants to fight the other guy who has one belt. That's what he's going after which should be the ambition and goal of everybody who gets a title.

**Ben Damon**

With the money available it's no surprise that negotiations have proved difficult. It's even less shocking that contract talks conducted on social media don't work. Pleasingly we are being blessed with major fights in other divisions but the sooner we see the heavyweights back the better!

**Liam Smith**

I think it's becoming a bit frustrating for everybody. The two best umming and ahing about fighting each other over silly amounts of money. I think anyone would bite your hand off for the money that they're gonna be getting. We need an undisputed heavyweight champion.

**Sunny Edwards**

It's a boxer's market right now. The purses have been inflated at heavyweight and you can see why they take time to negotiate. They all believe they hold a significant amount of worth and none of them are willing to lose too much face at the negotiating table to get the fights on.

## 10 COUNT

### THE SECOND HALF

As the first half of the year draws to a close, we look at what the next six months has in store

#### 1 ERROL SPENCE VS TERENCE CRAWFORD

Finally, the two best welterweights in the world, Spence and Crawford, will meet at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas on July 29. Unlike other great superfights left too late, this one was made right in the nick of time.

#### 2 STEPHEN FULTON VS NAOYA INOUE

Just four days before Spence and Crawford collide in Las Vegas, super-bantam Fulton, another of America's best fighters, will travel to Japan to fight the fearsome Inoue. This is as good as it gets in the lower weights.

#### 3 ARTUR BETERBIEV VS CALLUM SMITH

There are few fighters as feared as IBF light-heavyweight champion Beterbiev right now, yet Britain's Smith, a former super-middleweight belt-holder now campaigning at 175lbs, will confront the Russian in Quebec on August 19.

#### 4 EMANUEL NAVARRETE VS OSCAR VALDEZ

Two men who know only one way to fight, aggressive punchers Navarrete and Valdez will lock horns on August 12 in Glendale, with Navarrete's WBO junior-lightweight title at stake.

#### 5 EIMANTAS STANIONIS VS VERGIL ORTIZ JNR

This battle of unbeaten welterweights should be a good one on July 8 in San Antonio, Texas, with Stanionis and Ortiz a combined 33-0. Stanionis, from Lithuania, will start the fight as WBA welterweight champion, but Ortiz is a man of whom great things are expected.

#### 6 ZHILEI ZHANG VS JOE JOYCE II

Following Zhang's upset win over Joyce in April, when a damaged eye forced 'The Juggernaut' to surrender in round six, the two heavyweights will do it again on September 2 in Wembley.

#### 7 OLEKSANDR USYK VS DANIEL DUBOIS

While on paper a mismatch, the August 26 heavyweight title fight in Poland between Usyk and Dubois nevertheless carries intrigue on account of Dubois, a Brit, possessing fight-ending power.

#### 8 JARON ENNIS VS ROIMAN VILLA

At 30-0 (28) Ennis can clearly punch, yet needs to test himself against the elite. Until then, on July 8 in Atlantic City, he will face Colombia's Roiman Villa, 26-1 (24), someone just as heavy-handed but even less proven.

#### 9 GEORGE KAMBOSOS VS MAXI HUGHES

In 2021, George Kambosos was world lightweight champion. However, following back-to-back defeats to Devin Haney, he looks to rebuild on July 22 in Shawnee against Maxi Hughes, Britain's own Cinderella Man.

#### 10 ALYCIA BAUMGARDNER VS CHRISTINA LINARDATOU

In what will be a good measure of Baumgardner's improvements, the women's super-featherweight champion will, on July 15 in Detroit, defend against Linardatou, the only woman to have beaten her as a pro (via a split-decision in 2018).



THE STORY CONTINUES:  
Eggington after one of many  
fights, with one of many  
belts, in an old-school career  
that is nowhere near over

Photo: MARK ROBINSON/GETTY IMAGES





# THE ODD COUPLE



**Steve Bunce**

@BigDaddyBunce

**Voice of boxing**

If Sam Eggington had an old overcoat and Jon Pegg owned a fedora, they would look like the last two fighting dandies on the street.

In their '50s clobber, they could very well have just left the offices and basement gym in Soho of Jack Solomons. In every picture ever taken of fight people in the '50s, they are always protected

against the coldest storm in history – hat, gloves, scarf, overcoat the size of a medium Persian rug. And a giant, smouldering cigar. Pegg and Eggington would fit right in.

In their ancient costumes, Pegg and Eggington could make their way to a coffee shop in Soho to discuss an offer of 50 guineas to fight a kid from South Africa at Harringay Arena. They are not just throwbacks; they are genuine men from boxing history.

We often use words like ducker, diver, survivor, hustler and fixer in boxing like they are insults, a description to make you wary. Forget that interpretation, in every decade of the modern game, being a ducker, a diver, a survivor, a hustler and a fixer should be a compliment. And that goes for men and women on both sides of the ropes. It particularly applies to the most successful men in our business. The very wealthiest have found ways to survive, to outlast the fighters and overcome massive setbacks.

Sam Eggington has fought 42 times since his debut as a teenager in 2012. He's won 34 times and lost eight times. He started off way down the bill, nicking about a grand in cash for a fight on the road one night in Swansea against an unbeaten local fighter. Jon Pegg was the same when he boxed. No glamour. Pegg walked away after eight fights. Eggington continued to fight in the shadows. They are a team, the odd couple.

Eggington and Pegg fit the description several times over of boxing survivors. No chance at the start, hard fights, defeats, often dismissed by boxing clowns, great wins against the odds, humility and constant learning. It

## Sam Eggington and Jon Pegg are only just getting started

is all real stuff; success against the form and the house fighter. And paydays that they could have only dreamed about that long, long night when they drove back from Swansea.

"Sam has beaten eight unbeaten men," said Pegg. "Not many fighters have beaten that many unbeaten men. Take a look – it's just part of the story."

Pegg is right, by the way.

Eggington lost in *Prizefighter* in his fourth bout. He was still a kid; it was 2014, and seven fights and 15 months

later, he was the British welterweight champion, and he was still only 21. Nobody saw that coming. He added the European – the real European, not a can of soup version – in 2017.

Also, think about how many bold and stupid and boring claims there are that some promising but overprotected

fighter is going to win a British and world title by the time he is 20 or 21.

Sam and Pegg just got on with it – no hype, just fight, could be their mantra.

"They were great days," said Eggington. "It was all happening so fast, and I was still learning." Then, between 2017 and 2019, there were three losses in six fights in a short period. There was misguided talk that the hard apprenticeship had taken a toll and that he was, at just 24 or 25, finished.

No, as he said, he was still learning.

**'THAT'S SAM – NO PARTY, NO CELEBRATION. HE FIGHTS, HE LEAVES, THAT'S IT'**

Since losing to Liam Smith in 2019, Eggington has been on a great run. He has lost two wafer-thin decisions, won a few belts and has looked better each time he steps into the ring. He has also been in a couple of Fight of the Year contenders.

"My fights are not as hard as people think – I do what I want," Eggington told me.

A few weeks ago in Bournemouth, after the win over Joe Pigford, Eggington got back to the hotel after the fight,

went to his room, got his stuff and drove home to Birmingham. It was the act of a road warrior.

"I just wanted to get back to my family," Eggington said last week in Cannock.

"That's just Sam – no party, no celebration. He fights, he leaves, that's it, and it has always been that way," added Pegg.

In the Pigford fight, Eggington looked like a different kid to the boy/man he so often was in some of his thrilling wins and losses. He has matured, he has adapted and right now he might just be at his very best. The truth is that many thought his best was a few years and a few losses ago. That is surviving and thriving in the harshest of sports. Eggington is getting better at a time when many thought he would no longer be a contender. That career trajectory must be just about the oldest of old-school moves; nobody else in British boxing is quite like Eggington. Some have fought more often, lost more, won more, but Eggington had that harsh start and just two fights ago he was boxing on the inaugural dinner show at Scott Murray's Excelsior Club. The Excelsior even sounds like something Jack Solomons dreamed up.

"So, in a Sam Eggington dream world, who would you like to fight?" I asked him last week. "Antonio Margarito. I hear he's coming back – that would be a great fight if he needs an opponent," he told me.

I never saw that one coming. If they ever have fights in five-foot rings, I think we might have found the first classic.

"There are a lot of offers right now," said Pegg. "We are looking – there is no rush, Sam is just getting started."

It might just be true; Jack Solomons would be proud. Now, where is my tit-for-tat and my Cuban lah-di-dah?

**CLUB CLASSICS:**  
[Left to right] Scott Murray, Sam Eggington, prospect Nyall Berry and Bunce, with Jon Pegg behind, at the Excelsior





Errol Spence is right to query what the sanctioning bodies are spending his money on, writes **George Gigney**

**YOUTUBE**

ERROL SPENCE JNR and Terence Crawford embarked on a couple of press conferences to promote their superfight next month, fielding questions from the press and getting another opportunity to size each other up in person. There was some trash talk between the two but, by and large, what came across was a lot of mutual respect and anticipation of what is the biggest fight of both their careers.

It was Spence who pulled out the biggest surprise during these media obligations, though, when he expressed his anger over constantly having to pay sanctioning fees to the various sanctioning bodies whose titles he holds, without knowing what that money is used for.

"We give three per cent to these organisations," he said to the gathered media. "I mean, we gotta know where

this money [is] going to. You've got Canelo [Alvarez] and [Anthony] Joshua and all these guys, making \$50million [per fight] and these belts getting three per cent of that. Where's it going? How is it helping the fighters out? What are they doing with it?"

As the owner of three baubles, Spence will pay nine per cent of his purse from the Crawford fight to the IBF, WBA and WBC collectively. And he is absolutely right to take umbrage with that.

The *Boxing News* stance on these 'world' titles has been clear for a while, so there's no need to go over that again here. But what is important about this situation is a fighter of Spence's standing choosing to highlight the limitations of these sanctioning bodies. Each of these organisations, and the WBO, use sanctioning fees to cover operating costs as well as contributing to charitable

endeavours such as helping fighters and former who are struggling financially.

The problem, as Spence stated, is that there is no transparency over how much money is used by these organisations to help fighters. For the biggest fights, with multi-million dollar purses, the sanctioning bodies are raking in serious cash simply for having their title on the line. And that's not to mention the countless fights that happen week in, week out with their spurious 'international' and 'interim' belts involved, all of which will also come with sanctioning fees.

It's a racket. And Spence is asking the right question: what's in this for me? Why should a fighter sacrifice any portion of their purse just for the right to say they are a 'champion'?

By raising this issue at these press conferences, Spence is giving this

# A CALL FOR TRANSPARENCY

Photo: RYAN HAFEY/PREMIER BOXING CHAMPIONS

**MONEY WELL SPENT?**  
Spence will surrender 9% of his Crawford purse for the right to call himself 'champion'





Photo: CHRIS HYDE/GETTY IMAGES



issue the attention it deserves. When joining the media for huddles, he was asked again by reporters to expand on his comments and others involved in the fight, such as Showtime's Stephen Espinoza, were also queried on their views surrounding these sanctioning fees.

For what it's worth, Espinoza agrees with Spence and said it is well worth asking these questions and finding out exactly what is done with this money.

In an ideal world, the winner of Spence-Crawford would refuse to pose with the belts, sling them in the bin and say "I am number one – no one can dispute that – and I don't need these belts to prove that." The sooner the sanctioning bodies become completely obsolete, the better.

There was another interesting tidbit from Espinoza's conversation with a media scrum when he was asked why he is so "transparent" with the media. In reality, of course, there is a lot that Espinoza keeps from the press, and rightly so. But, as network executives go, Espinoza is notably accessible and doesn't shy away from an interview.

There is one area he purposely keeps quiet about, though: the details of

negotiations. As he put it: "The more you see people talking about negotiating, the less negotiating there actually is [going on]."

That's a sentiment that a lot of fans would do well to keep in mind when promoters and fighters jump on social media and start talking about percentages and making deals. That is not where agreements are made: negotiations are properly hashed out in person, not on social media.

That ties in nicely to an entertaining YouTube video that was uploaded by Propa Boxing this past week that focused on Tyson Fury's current standing with the public.

The argument made in the video is that Fury – once on top of the world after his trilogy with Deontay Wilder – now finds himself with a lot of detractors because he keeps going back on his word.

There's not enough room in this column to list all the different promises Fury has made even in just the past year, but the biggest disappointments for fans are the fact he has not fought and does not look close to fighting either Oleksandr Usyk or Joshua, despite

repeatedly talking about his intention to face both.

Fury is an exceptional fighter with an incredible story and bags of charisma. But he's currently torpedoing his own reputation. While he still has plenty of fans, as the video from Propa Boxing highlights, he is also losing swaths of them the longer he goes without fighting Usyk or Joshua while talking about fighting the likes of UFC heavyweight champion Jon Jones.

#### **WEBSITES**

Something that hasn't garnered as much media attention as it maybe should have is the recent activity of promotional outfit Skill Challenge Promotions. The Saudi Arabian company clearly has deep pockets and has recently picked up Usyk and Wilder. According to ProBox TV, they are also close to signing Devin Haney.

They're amassing quite the stable, but there is very little information about the organisation. It's far too early to get a proper read on how Skill Challenge will impact the sport, if at all, but with the money available in that part of the world, some serious moves could be made.

Well worth keeping an eye on.

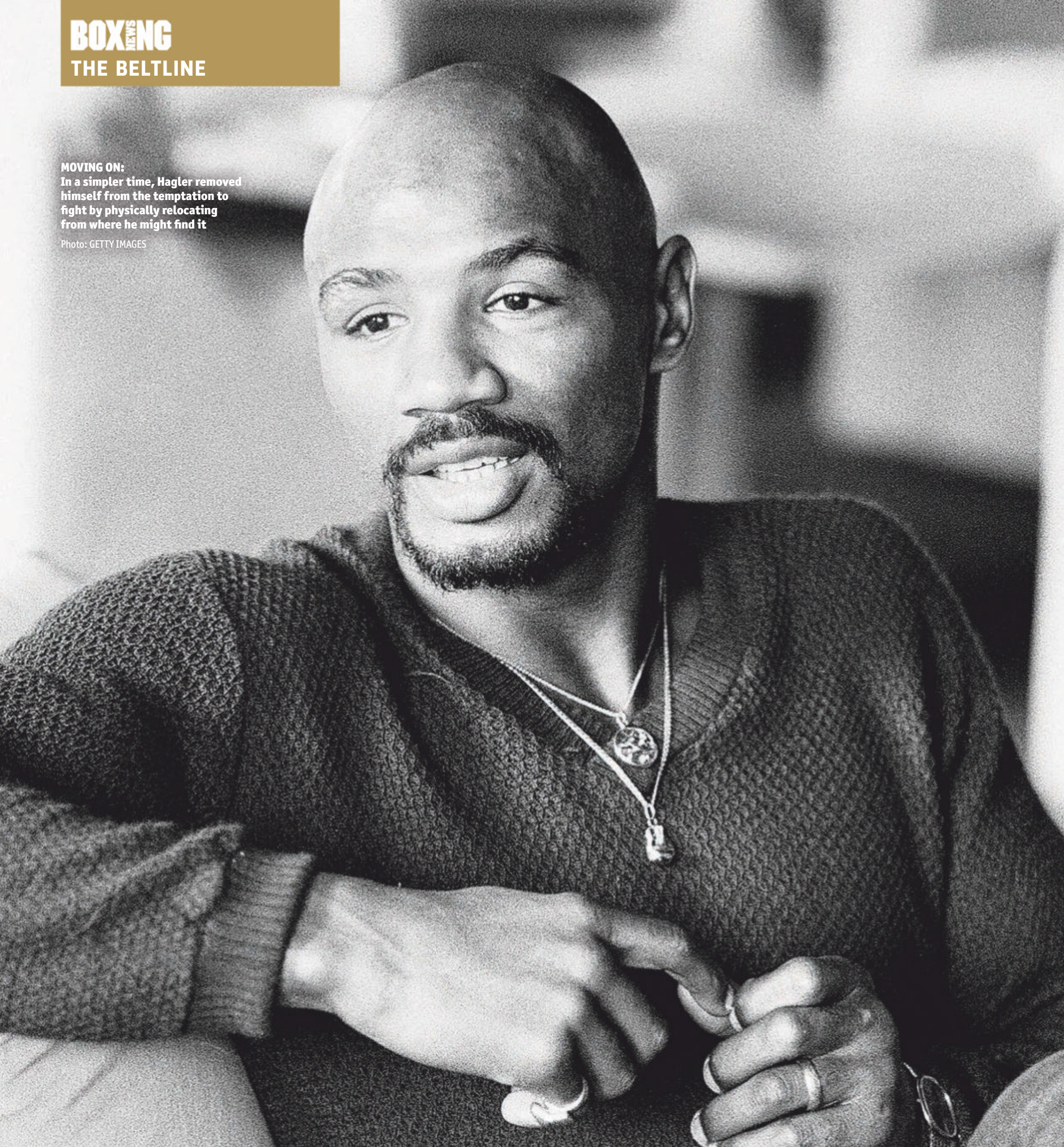
#### **BOXING ON THE BOX**

**JUNE 25**  
**EDGAR BERLANGA-**  
**JASON QUIGLEY**  
**DAZN**  
Coverage begins  
at 1am



**MOVING ON:**  
In a simpler time, Hagler removed himself from the temptation to fight by physically relocating from where he might find it

Photo: GETTY IMAGES



# How to Disappear Completely

Does a life lived online make it harder for retired boxers to stay retired these days?





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**Online Editor**

F all the reasons to admire Marvelous Marvin Hagler, a finer achievement than any title or victory was his ability to walk away from his love and, unlike Orpheus in the case of Eurydice, resist the temptation to look back and ruin everything.

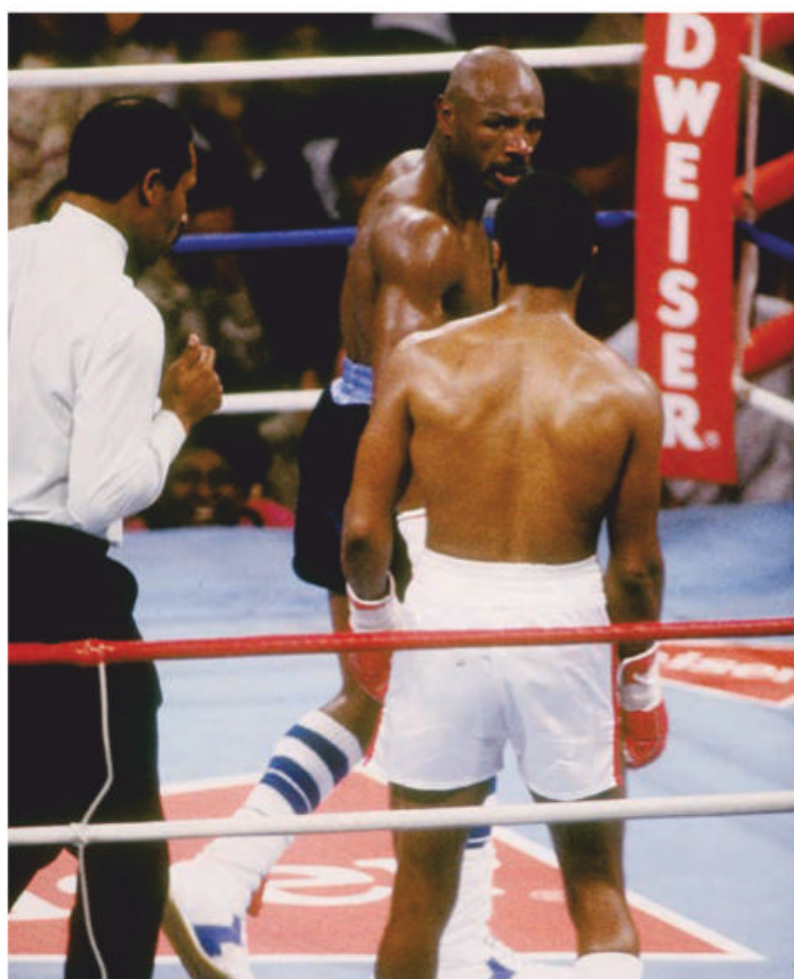
That, by virtue of it being such a rarity in boxing, carries a weight far greater than

any championship belt. Not only that, the way in which Hagler turned his back on the sport in 1988, essentially by fleeing to Italy and becoming an actor, is one of the greatest examples of independence and sheer bloody-mindedness the sport has ever seen.

Then again, perhaps in those days it was easier, both to retire and stay retired. In fact, some might go so far as to say only Hagler's competitive spirit, which burned like never before after losing against Ray Leonard in '87, would have been a real motivating factor for any U-turn. They might also say that once settled in Italy, hardly a hotbed as far as boxing is concerned, Hagler would have been able to unplug his mind from the sport in a way no retired boxer could today, thanks to social media and how the world, as a result, has grown tougher to escape from. Nowadays, it's true, whether you're in Milan or Brockton, Massachusetts, there is no ignoring what goes on around the world. Nor, whether you are active or retired, is there any avoiding the day-to-day shenanigans of the boxing world.

For those who have recently retired from the sport, I often wonder how this relentless exposure to it impacts the already difficult transition from fighter to civilian. After all, as with any breakup, the last thing one wants to see every day on their phone is an image from happier times. This only becomes more of an issue, too, when the ex-partner happens to leave their mark on you, either physically or psychologically, the way boxing tends to do to most who court her during an intense and impressionable time in their life. To then see this abusive partner online, both her face and the ease with which she has forgotten, will ultimately trigger emotions they are trying to leave behind and, in turn, leave them unable to move forward.

What makes matters worse is that boxing, by its very nature, encourages



**THE BITTER END:** There can be little doubt Hagler's competitive fire still burned after his last fight, against Sugar Ray Leonard

its participants to think they are the centre of their own universe. Despite their training team, much of the hard work is done alone, in silence, with the payoff to come – whether fame or fortune – the only thing that sustains many of them through a 10-week training camp. This, one could argue, creates in a boxer both a selfishness and a hunger for attention, not unlike that of a musician or a writer or a painter, people who take a leap of faith, create in solitude, and then hope at a later date they will find an audience with whom their work can be shared. Boxers, by fighting, get this opportunity as well. They get the opportunity to express themselves and, for one night only, feel like they are stronger and more powerful than any other man or woman walking the earth.

Then, one day, they are just like everyone else. Deflated, both physically and mentally, they are sitting at home on a Tuesday afternoon scrolling aimlessly through their social media feed while the rest of the world are getting on with their lives. No longer, despite all they have achieved, does anyone in the real world seemingly care about them. The best they can hope for now, as they pathetically thumb through their timeline, is that they stumble across footage from an old fight of theirs, with comments below it working to either produce a sentimental smile or have them spoiling for an argument.

If not that, they might see posts from fellow fighters, those who replaced them and now stand to receive the limelight and money once set aside for

them. These posts they will read with no small amount of envy, in itself a form of self-harm, and they will think, You wouldn't have lasted a round with me in my prime, mate. In fact, I could probably beat you now. They will then contemplate posting this thought rather than simply thinking it. Someone needs to hear it, surely.

Eight weeks later, they are training again. More importantly, they have told the world they are training again. Just like that, after so many years in the wilderness, held captive and tortured by their own insignificance and the indifference of fans, they have found crumbs of relevance again, albeit only online. Whether they can still do it – compete, that is – is neither here nor there. The important thing is this: people care about them once more. "Look at me, I'm back," they will tweet. "Tell a friend. Tell the world."

In truth, though it has always been greeted with rolling eyes, there used to be something rather heroic about a boxing comeback. The good ones brought to mind *Rocky* scripts and suggested a personal battle against the odds, with the primary aim to prove a point to oneself and any doubters. Yet nowadays, given those ostensibly noble reasons are as good as gone from a returning boxer's thought process, a boxing comeback is not so much heroic as tragic. Now, rather than to squeeze from their body the dregs of their athleticism before it is too late, one senses an aching for attention, particularly in a world in which attention is currency, is forever the driving force in the minds of these returning boxers. With that attention comes money, of course, which helps the broke ones, but it is still the attention they seek above anything else.

After all, at a time when everybody has a platform and a voice, how painful it must be for ex-fighters to fade into irrelevance and, unlike before, now watch the world continue in their absence, with constant updates drip-fed to them via their phone. Increasingly, and because of this, these retired fighters then feel the need to continually remind people they still exist and will invariably do so via an array of weird and wonderful methods; methods often so weird and wonderful they will have most not fondly reminiscing but instead concerned for their mental wellbeing. Failing that, they will just announce a comeback, aware that like any abusive partner who gets a kick out of seeing their victim come crawling back for more, boxing will be standing at the door with her arms wide open.

She will then say to them, "I told you, didn't I? You are nothing without me."





**Derek Williams**

@SweetD001

**Ex-EBU champ**

I FIRST met Al Hamilton MBE after one of my fights, way back in 1991. I had just defended my Commonwealth title with a second round knockout of Jimmy Thunder. With the jubilation of knowing that my 'punch-perfect' victory had made a significant statement to my closest rival at the time, Lennox Lewis, who was ringside, I exited the boxing ring.

Al was also ringside. We had never met before, but I was especially happy to see him and invited him backstage with my family and a few friends.

I had been away in the USA where I had trained for the Thunder fight at Gallagher's, No Guts, No Glory boxing gym in Queen's, New York. While there, I planned to contact Al on my return to London. I knew about him through all the events that he had been hosting in the community and in the sports arena. So, seeing him at the fight was a bonus.

Al and I formed a friendship that has been solid for more than 30 years. He has arranged appearances for me as a special guest and as a keynote speaker at many events.

Al is a boxing historian and the author of two successful football books – one a bestseller, *Black Pearls Of Soccer*, and *Black Pearls Shine On!* – and his latest book, *Frostbites On Fingertips*, which covers his life's journey.

He's the founder of The Commonwealth Sports Awards, which has been in existence for more than 40 years and honours the achievements of

### Why I value my friendship with Al Hamilton so highly

athletes and officials who have excelled or made recognised contributions to their sport during the year.

We have journeyed around the world together. During our travels, I came to appreciate why he has been such a positive influence on so many people. But it wasn't always smooth sailing for him, particularly in the 1970s and '80s.

It is an uncomfortable topic, but Britain was a far different landscape to what it is today. Racism was rampant and far more open. Opportunities for black and brown people to strive in most fields was a challenge. At times, it was a closed door.

During those times, four men essentially governed boxing – Jarvis

Astaire, Mike Barrett, Micky Duff and Terry Lawless. Their company was National Promotions, based in London's fast-paced West End. One Sunday newspaper called them 'The Cartel', and I remember them all; well-groomed men in the finest tailored suits. I was managed by Barrett and promoted by National Promotions. I know the respect that they commanded in Britain and around the world.

But Al had always been one who stood up for his rights. I know of a few differences he had with National Promotions.

As one of only a few black journalists in boxing at the time, Al was the sports editor for *The Caribbean Times*, which was a prominent newspaper, established across the country and well-read in communities with large black and brown populations.

Following the usual protocol, Al applied to National Promotions for a press pass for one of their shows. When

his pass did not arrive, he contacted their press officer, who informed him that one would not be granted to him. Apparently, Duff had blocked the issuing of the pass because he did not think *The Caribbean Times* was worthy.

On hearing that his request was denied, Al informed the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and, a few hours later, a press pass was issued. There were other obstacles that had to be conquered, but Al had a great love of boxing and remained involved.

One of his first personal connections in the sport was with middleweight Frankie Lucas. They both arrived in England from the Caribbean in 1962; Frankie from St Vincent and the Grenadines and Al from Jamaica.

Frankie boxed out of Sir Phillip Game amateur boxing club in Croydon. He was successful there, and went on to win the national boxing championships.

The British amateur boxing selectors overlooked Frankie

when they were selecting the team for the Commonwealth Games in New Zealand in 1974. They chose Carl Speare as their representative. Frankie had already beaten Speare in the ABA finals. So, as the reigning ABA champion, he was naturally expecting to be the British choice. It was not to be.

Al was good friends with Frankie, so as part of a small team lead by policeman Ken Remington, with the high commissioner, they arranged for Frankie to box for St Vincent and the Grenadines. He won a gold medal.

Al is also the man partly behind Frank Bruno's transition from being a statistic as an amateur boxing champion to one of Britain's most loved boxers.

Bruno was from the Wandsworth area of London, but Al introduced him to the reputed Sir Philip Game boxing club, where Lucas and the McKenzie brothers trained.

After Frank won the ABA title, Al decided to find the best promotional team for him. They met with Lawless to explore the idea of a young Bruno signing a professional contract. Al was Frank's acting agent and attempted to get the best deal for him. Eventually, the whole arrangement was settled, but they omitted Al.

The agreement that was negotiated with National Promotions was not honoured. Al was coldly left out and had no further involvement with Bruno's career. It did not end there. What transpired next seemed like a scene from a blockbuster movie which highlighted the injustice towards Al.

# THE MAN BEHIND THE SCENES



While preparing for a fight at the Royal Albert Hall, I was training at the The Ring boxing gym, in Blackfriars. George Francis was there training Lloyd Honeyghan at the time and was surprised when Al walked in to see me. I was standing beside Al when George respectfully approached him and apologised. He was referring to what he had said in a court case to support Lawless and Duff. It was not correct, but George worked closely with National Promotions and was loyal to them.

Al had been in court to formally address the way in which they had influenced Bruno into joining their promotional outfit. They had not

honoured the payment to Al, who had advised Frank to sign with National Promotions.

The behind-the-scenes issues continued. Al was involved with Michael Watson's case at the high court, where the British Boxing Board of Control was sued for negligence following the brain damage Michael sustained in his second fight with Chris Eubank.

Al was contacted by Michael's mother, Joan. She was aware Al had connections in a lot of areas, so she asked him to help, in whatever way he thought best. Al reached out to the law firm Myers Fletcher, who then represented Michael and won a significant amount for him.

Al Hamilton MBE is not a holder of a British Boxing Board of Control licence, but he is a recognised face and voice of boxing. He has been invited by former British Boxing Board general secretary, Simon Block to sit at the top table of the Commonwealth Boxing Council when important decisions have been made.

Al remains an avid fan of boxing and is still ready to offer support for any boxer, or anyone in the field of boxing.

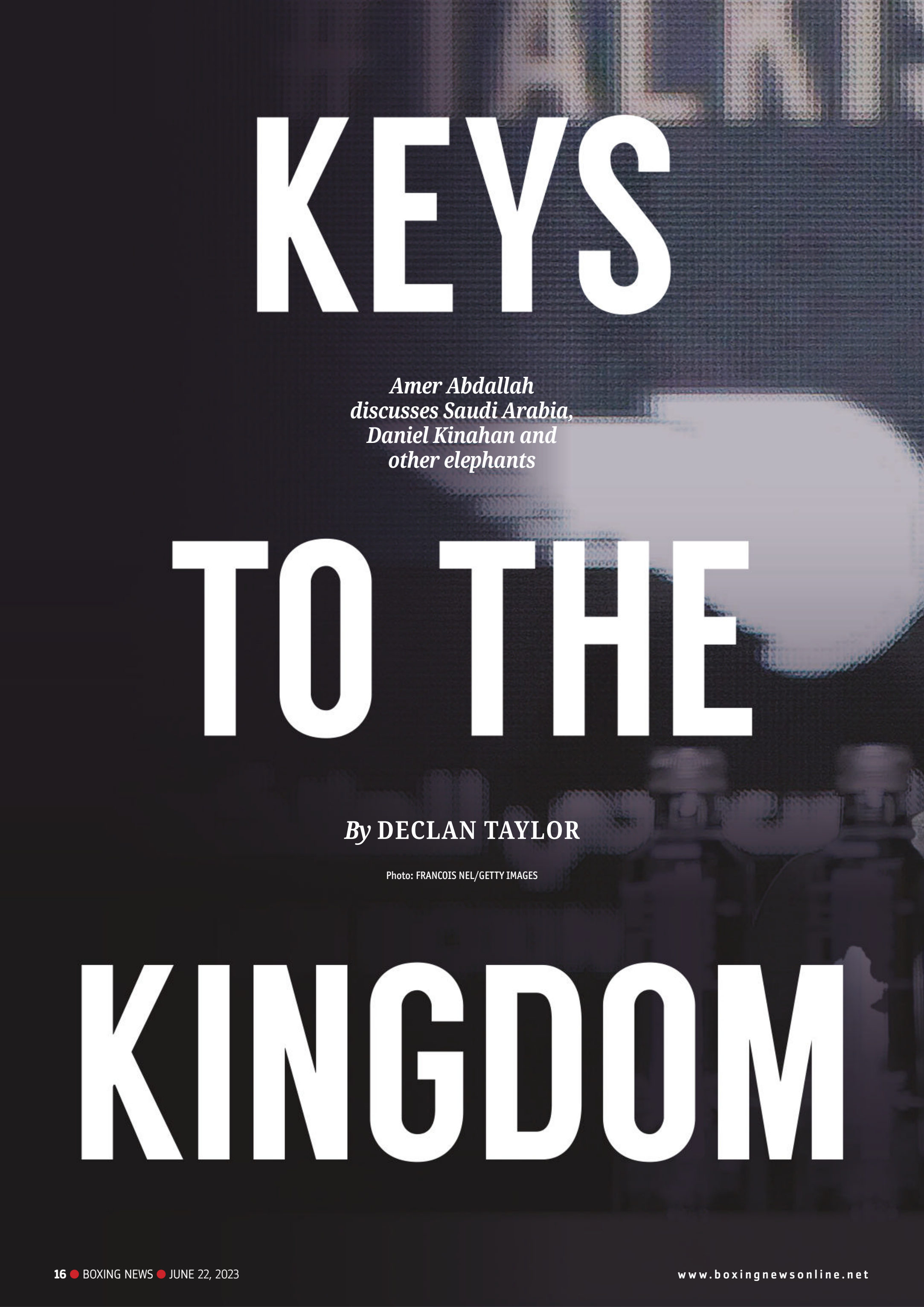
My times talking to Al are always important, because not only are we friends, after all our years of travelling together, he has always got some pearl of knowledge to offer.

**ON THE RISE:**  
But there were  
wranglings behind  
the scenes as Bruno  
turned professional

Photo: GETTY IMAGES







# KEYS

*Amer Abdallah  
discusses Saudi Arabia,  
Daniel Kinahan and  
other elephants*

# TO THE

*By* DECLAN TAYLOR

Photo: FRANCOIS NEL/GETTY IMAGES

# KINGDOM





perhaps the sport's most important figure.

It is now just over six months since the former champion kickboxer assumed his role as Head of Boxing for Skill Challenge Entertainment (SCEE), the promotional

company behind the emergence of Saudi Arabia as the most lucrative destination in the sport.

"I'll be honest with you here," he says. "I still pinch myself every day that I've got this opportunity and the blessing that has been bestowed upon me. It's amazing. It's a massive position and a massive responsibility. To me, it's everything I dreamed of doing – being a part of one of the biggest movements in boxing.

"I'll never take it for granted. I know how big this is and I have full intention to

take this all the way to the top and to do things that are unparalleled in this sport."

Boxing is no stranger to those who deal in hyperbole, but Abdallah is in the rare position where he can do exactly as he says. The staggering idea of Tyson Fury, Oleksandr Usyk, Anthony Joshua and Deontay Wilder all fighting on the same card, for instance, is discussed with a similar certainty to that of Eddie Hearn looking ahead to a half-decent show at the O2 Arena.

Well-spoken and charming, Abdallah



seems like a man perfectly positioned between the members of the Saudi Arabian royal family who quite literally hold the keys to the Kingdom and the members of the boxing world with whom he had already forged strong relationships during his previous years in the sport.

But the spectre of one of his key alliances from the past has begun to loom over his new work, and it does not seem to be going away. To his credit, Abdallah was happy to discuss the suggestions that Daniel Kinahan, who he has been pictured alongside multiple times in the past, is somehow involved in his current dealings.

"I'll make it very easy for you to understand," says Abdallah, who raised a wry smile on mention of the Irishman's name.

"After everything came out and after those sanctions came out, everybody that I know disassociated themselves from him. That includes me. Whatever is going to happen is going to happen and we wish everybody the best, but there is absolutely no affiliation here.

"I haven't even responded to anything. I see the Tweets, the texts and everything."

The pair met in Dubai, where it is said Kinahan currently resides. Unless you have been living under a rock, you will know that the man who emerged as the biggest power broker in the entire sport is now considered the world's most wanted man due to allegations made against him in relation to the Kinahan cartel.

In April last year, his face, alongside that of his father Christy and brother Christopher Jr, were put on Wanted posters by the US authorities who also pledged a reward of up to \$5million for "information leading to the financial disruption of the Kinahan criminal organisation" or the arrest of any of those three men. It was a watershed moment for the sport, and particularly for those who had done business with him in the past.

"It's fair to say that I know the guy," Abdallah continues. "It's fair to say I've met the guy, because most of the boxing – in fact, *all* of the boxing world – has also. I don't shy away from that.

"I've had candid conversations in the past asking if there is an affiliation with that, and the answer is absolutely not. That's why we were able to move forward.

"I had met with him earlier that year, when we came to Dubai and before everything came out. But once it came out, everybody went their own way. It's not worth that kind of involvement.

"We wish everybody the best and I hope it all works out for everybody. The truth will always come out. But to insinuate anything here, that's slanderous. To say he's involved or a part of anything, that's a big allegation and the answer is absolutely not."

Instead, Abdallah answers to Prince Khalid bin Abdulaziz, the founder and chairman of SCEE, who essentially controls the strings of the deepest purse in the sport. But for their Head of Boxing, finding the balance between what is deserved and what is disrespectful has been a key challenge.

"Here's the thing," he begins. "Really, there's an elephant in the room. Any time

you come to the table where Saudi Arabia are interested in a fight, there is always a premium price that ends up being set.

"I've talked to most, if not all, of the top guys and any time there has been a fight involving them, the number is up there. It gets to a point where the number, respectfully to them, is ridiculous.

"But I've walked the fighter's path – I've fought, I've managed, I've promoted, I've owned a gym, I've worked a corner, I've wrapped hands. I've touched a lot of parts of this game, so I get it. Fighters have got to ask for the world, I don't fault them for that, but on the other side they can't fault me for just walking away and not coming back to renegotiate.

"It's almost disrespectful to come back with those kinds of numbers. It doesn't mean the Kingdom can't bear those numbers, you just have to put a value to the actual worth to a fight itself, or a fighter."

It has also been suggested that, while the eye-watering numbers on offer in the Kingdom may well pave the way for the biggest fights to take place, they have also skewed the market in such a way that the elite fighters are no longer happy to fight for anything other than Saudi Money.

Take, for example, Usyk. The Ukrainian, who is now signed with SCEE, walked away from negotiations regarding a fight with Fury at Wembley Stadium because it was simply nowhere near as lucrative as facing him – or probably any other heavyweight – in Saudi.

Abdallah, for once, begins to raise his voice at the notion that this might be damaging to the sport. It's an "insulting" suggestion, he argues.

"Look, I'm not ignorant to that and that's a fair question, but listen, that's the sport," he counters. "Mayweather-Pacquiao didn't get made for seven years because of all the politics. It literally took us two weeks to make the biggest fights happen. Money does flex, money does matter in this sport, because money and timing is everything.

"If you have the right funds and the right timing, then any fight can be made. I don't think it's fair to describe us as being disruptive in the sport – if anything, it unifies the sport and gives the fighters what they

want, when they want it, and it gives the fans what they want, too.

"We're willing to take that risk, so it's almost insulting to say we are coming in and disrupting the sport – the sport is already disrupted. You already have the top guys that can't make a fight. You already have fights that can't be made because of all these disruptions. We come in and say we will pay the fighters X-amount, we will do a full buy-out and put on the fight. It's insulting to even visit the notion that it's ruining everything.

"We are not going to make every fight. Other fights will happen, but we will pick and choose who we want to work with, when we want to work with them. That's the nature of any business: being in the right place at the right time and having the right product. This is where we're at."

So, what of that heavy weight double-header? Was that any more than bluster from a man trying to make a splash in a crowded market? It seems the answer is yes, much more.

"Firstly, we should point out that all four guys are likely fighting in August or September," Abdallah says. "But if, in the best case scenario, all of them win those fights and come out unscathed, then I think we are going to have an event in December that will absolutely blow the socks off the boxing world. It will be something that we absolutely have interest in, but nothing is official yet.

"There haven't been any offers made, any financial numbers discussed, because we are not in that position yet. It's not to say we don't have the funds, it's just that we aren't in the position to make the fight happen because these guys all have other

obligations before then.

"But by the end of the summer/early fall, we will be able to have a better picture of where these guys stand and get official offers out to them. I don't think the negotiations will be difficult and I don't think there will be any hurdles. I don't see any roadblocks in the way for this."

The biggest one, it would seem, are the egos in play. From a traditional boxing standpoint it is almost impossible to see all four men, with all the baggage they will bring,

**THE SPECTRE:  
Abdallah insists  
he no longer  
works with  
Daniel Kinahan**



“  
**IF YOU HAVE  
THE RIGHT  
FUNDS AND  
TIMING, ANY  
FIGHT CAN  
BE MADE”**





**MODERN GREATS:**  
Abdallah with  
Tyson Fury and  
Manny Pacquiao



agreeing to a fight on the same night. But this is no longer a traditional boxing marketplace.

"Prince Khalid is really the one who came up with this idea," Abdallah adds. "He asked me what I thought and I said, 'Your Highness, this is absolutely absurd'. It would be the biggest spectacle in the history of boxing – and that is why he wants to do it. He has the backing of the Ministry and tons of support from across the region, so I think the event itself is going to be massive.

"How can we make sure everyone is satisfied? Well, we are going to respect everybody's value and everybody's position and I would like to think, in turn, we will be respected as well.

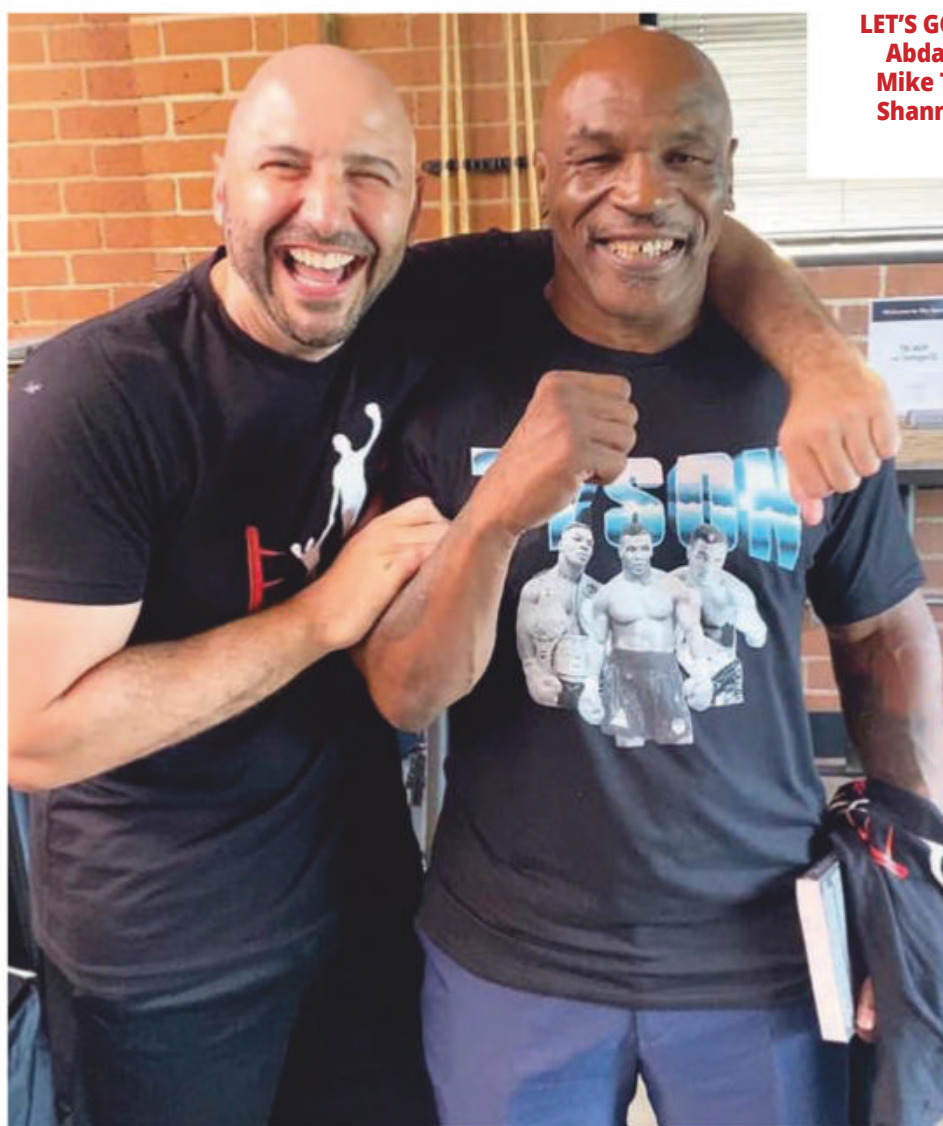
"We are not going to put an offer out there that will be, 1) insulting to anybody, or 2) anything below a premium price. It will probably be higher than any of them will have been paid before.

"And, 3) there will not be a negotiation. It

will be 'here's a great number, we'd love to make this work'. It will be a take-it-or-leave-it deal. It would be insulting if anybody came back and said 'I want more'."

It is clear these are unprecedented times for the sport and such a night would be in keeping with that. For Abdallah, it seems like another day in the office. But when your decisions can have a profound effect on the entire future of the sport, the work never stops.

Not even for a family reunion. **BN**



**LET'S GO, CHAMPS:**  
Abdallah with  
Mike Tyson and  
Shannon Briggs





# “I JUST WANT TO FIGHT”

*Dmitry Bivol would take on Beterbiev tomorrow and Canelo the day after that. But, he tells Declan Warrington, they don't seem quite as eager as him to make it happen*



**WHAT'S your understanding of the latest regarding your potential rematch with Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez?**

It's not like I don't want to fight Canelo anymore. If you asked me, "Would you prefer to fight Canelo?" I would say, "I prefer to fight for his belts". I don't *prefer* to fight him at 175lbs; I want to fight for the belts at 175lbs. I wanna move forward. I don't wanna just be the champion with one belt and keep it. I want to move forward. I want to get another belt in another weight class. It's good for my legacy; it's motivating me more. I don't like making defences of my belts. It's my belt – I made 10 defences of my belt. I wanna get another.

It could [still] happen, to be honest. If he wanted the fight, we could start discussing about this fight, but we didn't because he doesn't want this fight. He wanted fights against [Gennady] Golovkin and [John] Ryder, but he didn't talk with our team about the fight against me. It was just talk. I'm not just gonna sit and wait for him.

He's bluffing about wanting to fight me. I knew it before. I really don't want to fight him on the same terms [as in May 2022]. Why should I? I told him before, "Yes", and I agreed to all the terms. I like my position now. If he wants to fight me – okay, let's put the belts on the line. We can accept that. Have you heard of a fighter that goes into a rematch on the same terms [as previously, after winning the first fight]? I've never heard of that.

I want to fight in September, or October. This is our plan – to get a fight in September, October, or November maybe.

**What did you think of his performance against John Ryder last month? Is he in decline?**

I didn't see the full fight, but I saw some parts of the fight. It wasn't the best performance on Canelo's side, but Ryder is not an easy opponent, either.

I don't think he's going down – it's just a fight that wasn't his

best performance. It could be many reasons why Canelo didn't have a good performance. Maybe it was his hometown [of Guadalajara], maybe Ryder had him off his game as a southpaw, and maybe because he had a bad breakfast. I don't know.

**Why do you think he thinks he can win a rematch, given how one-sided your first fight was?**

Because we are athletes. Every time, we have a lot of excuses. We can find a lot of reasons why we lose. Even when I win, some fights I tell myself, "I could be better, because I didn't do this and this; I could be better next time". And he thought the same.

**What do you make of reports of him instead fighting Badou Jack, at cruiserweight, having already struggled at light-heavyweight?**

I haven't seen Badou Jack for many years. In what shape he's in now; how he's fighting. Canelo's not a cruiserweight, of course – he's small for cruiserweight, but maybe he sees something in Badou Jack. If you couldn't fight in light-heavyweight, of course try cruiserweight... I'm joking. Maybe he could find some weaknesses in Badou Jack.

**What about your understanding of a potential fight between you and Artur Beterbiev?**

I want belts. I want winners. Unification – I want to unify belts. I've been wanting this for over a year. We've been trying to make the fight. We talked about this fight – we wanted it, but we didn't get the fight.

**How do you feel when the WBC and Bob Arum cite Russia's invasion of**

**Ukraine as a reason you and he shouldn't fight?**

It's not too serious. It looks funny because [Canadian citizen] Beterbiev is Russian too. I was born in Kyrgyzstan; I spent almost half of my life there. If I was born there, I could go anytime and get my passport. What's the problem? I think there's some other reason [they're saying that]. I don't know what it is, but it's not the main problem keeping us from making the fight.

Politics and sports are two different things. I hope one day it will be really clean – sports will be separated from politics. I really hope. Because all my life I've spent it boxing – I spent all my life in the

boxing gym, and I just want to fight. I want to show people that you can achieve something if you work hard. Even if you come from a small city, you could be someone.

**Who wins when Beterbiev fights Callum Smith on August 19?**

I see Beterbiev as more skilful, more powerful, and more confident. Smith is not easy, of course, but how the fight goes will depend on Smith more. If he is confident, the fight is gonna be really interesting. If he's not, it could end up one-sided. I say it's a good fight.

It was a nice fight [in January between Beterbiev and Anthony Yarde]. It was nice performance for Yarde. He showed himself, and he was good. I think it's a good fight for Yarde.

**To what extent does your improved English owe to the difficulty of marketing you as a leading fighter without you being able to speak it?**

It's become better, yeah. I'm practising more, I'm watching show, I'm even trying to read some books, but it's terrible for me. I try to read some of the news in English and translate it.

It's because I just want to understand people who are talking with me a bit more. Mainly that, but of course it's good for promoting myself. But inside, I just want to understand people who are talking to me, and I want people to understand me when I'm talking.



**[BEING RUSSIAN] IS NOT WHAT'S PREVENTING THE FIGHT. POLITICS AND SPORT ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS”**



**NEW HORIZONS:**  
After making 10  
defences of his  
WBA belt, Bivol  
wants to unify

Photo: MARK ROBINSON  
MATCHROOM







# CLASS OF





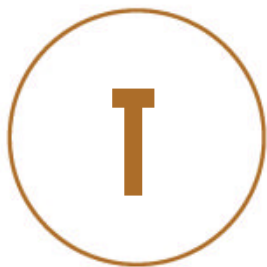
*The odd logistical  
problem couldn't stop  
this being another  
Hall of Fame weekend  
to remember*

**BY  
TRIS DIXON**

Photo:  
MIKE GREENHILL

# 2023





THE 2023 International Boxing Hall of Fame class included Timothy Bradley, Carl Froch, Rafael Marquez, Alicia Ashley, Laura Serrano (who did not attend), matchmakers

Brad Goodman and Brad Jacobs, trainer Joe Goossen, former HBO executive Seth Abraham and broadcaster Tim Ryan.

During Sunday's induction speeches, Marquez thanked his mother, father and sisters and described his journey as "difficult and beautiful".

Froch thanked his mother, Carol, and told trainer Robert McCracken he was a father figure, a brother and best friend all rolled into one, while Bradley said: "I didn't get here because I was better than everyone I fought, I got here because I wanted it more."

Ashley talked about being an underdog in her major fights – even when she was a champion – and having to fight often on the road. "The road that I took to get here, was akin to climbing Mt Everest," she said.

Posthumous inductees were light-heavyweight Tiger Jack Fox, flyweight champ Pone Kingpetch, and JoAnn Hagen in the women's trailblazer category.

### WEDNESDAY

A Hall of Fame stalwarts always stumble on to the grounds a day early. UK fight fan Glenn Wilson is one, Canadian boxing

supporter Eric Schmidt is another, Lee Groves, an analyst for CompuBox and writer for *The Ring*, is there, as is the event's host, James 'Smitty' Smith.

We met and talked in the museum, by the famous ring that hosted the 1971 Fight of the Century between Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali, and talked boxing until news broke that the first two official days of the Hall of Fame weekend would take place in the Turning Stone Casino, about 10 miles away.

Smoke from the uncontrollable Montreal wildfires had spread through the whole of New York state, turning areas, including Manhattan four hours south, a hazy, apocalyptic-looking and surreal orange. Visibility was less than a mile in some areas and you could smell the smoke. It caused some boxers to face travel issues, but not Froch, who famously had to delay going to Denmark for his first fight with Mikkel Kessler when an ash cloud from an Icelandic volcano caused chaos. Froch faced no such issues this time.

### THURSDAY

There's an elegance and charm, and most definitely a nostalgia about the museum grounds. The memorabilia is wonderful – fists cast from heroes of yesteryear, robes hung proudly in cabinets – of Ken Buchanan, Sugar Ray Leonard, Azumah Nelson, Arturo Gatti and many more – plaques of all of the inductees, fight-worn gloves from iconic bouts, championship belts and just about anything else you would care to see.

These are the grounds that have hosted Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, Floyd Mayweather, Archie Moore, Willie Pep, Sandy Saddler, Marvin Hagler and almost every modern great you could care to mention.

But when the festivities kicked off, they did so in the Turning Stone Showroom, a vacuous, impersonal hall, short on both light and atmosphere.

The Hall of Fame had to do what they could, and it was generous of the Turning Stone to play host but, really, what followed felt just like being Las Vegas in a fight week. A few journalists hunkered down and worked, not moving in case anyone of note came or left, and there was little daylight seen from the bowels of the casino.

"It's a little different kind of a year," admitted Hall of Fame president Ed Brophy.

The first Ringside Lecture of the day featured the inspirational Ann Wolfe, who spoke of her hardships, of finding boxing when she was a homeless mother of two, because she wanted to do something to do where she could use her natural athleticism, and her local basketball and football teams would not allow her to take her children while she trained, but the boxing club did.

"I had power," she said, talking about her impressive knockouts. "It was different. I know one thing, I had man power. Some women have men power, some don't."

Wolfe is a great character, and she was replaced on stage by two Mexican greats, fellow 2023 inductee Rafael Marquez and

Photo: MIKE GREENHILL

#### RECOGNITION:

There may not have been 80,000 fans in Canastota, but his Hall of Fame induction will still be something Froch talks about for years





one of the great little men, Humberto 'Chiquita' Gonzalez. 'Smitty' hosted.

Marquez, brother of Juan Manuel and who is training his 15-year-old son in Mexico, said he felt his four fights with Israel Vazquez, two wins over Mark 'Too Sharp' Johnson and victory over Tim Austin solidified his Hall of Fame claim, while Gonzalez spoke about his famed rivalry with Michael Carbajal, and said: "The hardest fights were the ones with Carbajal, but they were always the better ones, too, because I got more pay!"

The bell was sounded to officially open proceedings at 3pm, but neither Carbajal nor Micky Ward and Dicky Eklund made it in time to do their Q&s because of the wildfire issues, but towering super-welterweight Sebastian Fundora and his sister, 11-0 Gabriela, took their spot and spoke with fans.

Organisers paid tribute to inductees who had passed away over the past 12 months and there was warm applause for Bobby Goodman, Mogensalle, Jerry Roth, Steve Smoger, Mills Lane, Eder Jofre and Ken Buchanan but, with Roberto Duran's birthday only eight days away, Brophy led an early rendition of Happy Birthday for one of the all-time greats. Duran loved it.

#### FRIDAY

It was back to the Turning Stone, and while that might have been a First World problem, it felt more like a work convention than a celebration. Fortunately, word was out that everyone would be back on the Hall of Fame grounds for the Saturday, but still there were some travel problems. Inductee trainer Joe Goossen had not made it in time for his Ringside Lecture, so veteran fighter and trainer Robert Garcia ably stepped in.

In some ways, with the environmental issues and subsequent delays, it felt like this was the first day of the celebrations.

Froch and Bradley were both on hand. Froch was with McCracken, who seemed to be enjoying Carl getting some long-overdue respect, because Rob remembered there was a time Froch was overlooked by networks and media outlets despite his success, and an infuriated McCracken would beat the drum for Carl, lambasting them for not recognising what they had – a future Hall of Famer.

Bradley, who in early *Boxing News* interviews said he was aiming for the Hall of Fame before he even won a world title, said he had rejected several invitations to visit Canastota before, because he wanted his first time to be the one where he could see his own plaque on the walls. And what a ride he had. He signed anything for everyone, took countless selfies and not once could he be seen without a satisfied grin.

'Dutch Destroyer' Lucia Rijker was also around, and it was her first visit. She was due to be part of last year's trilogy of inductions but couldn't travel and so she was able to get her recognition this year. She was fascinating and talked about how she needed to fight to release her inner-beast, something she trains people to do today in some kind of therapy. She's incredibly softly spoken, charming and engaging.

I caught up with Michael Nunn, who was satisfied with his career, although he would

have liked to have fought Sugar Ray Leonard, Tommy Hearns or Roberto Duran. Nunn said he didn't want to fight Hagler, because they were friends, and he had also hoped to box Chris Eubank and Nigel Benn. Nunn, who spent around two decades behind bars, was incredibly positive about his past, saying it had made him stronger and stiffened his resolve to be a success on the outside.

The day finished with the 2023 inductees having their fists cast for immortality.

ShoBox came from the Turning Stone that Friday night, and many of the Hall of Fame guests were on hand to watch some of the bouts from ringside.

#### SATURDAY

It was back to the grounds, finally. The air was clear. Saturday is the peak of the weekend. The morning starts with a 5k run/jog/walk that numerous boxing personalities get involved with, there is the memorabilia show at the nearby High School and the day culminates with the big banquet, back at the Turning Stone.

Buddy McGirt opened up the grounds with a candid talk. He's always happy to discuss boxing, but his face lights up when you mention his football-playing daughter, who is a professional in Israel. Froch and Bradley shared the stage for a Ringside Lecture and then the always well-attended Referee Lecture saw Tony Weeks, Kenny Bayless and Sparkle Lee answer questions.

Former heavyweight title-holder Ray Mercer was around, and he was in great shape, talking about how he felt he pipped Lennox Lewis in their 10-round Madison Square Garden war, and how he admires Tyson Fury.

The highlight was when Duran came to my tent for an interview. Scores of fans followed him and he wound up being interviewed by Showtime's Kieran Mulvaney in front of a live audience – completely improvised, but playing up to it every second – giving off some kind of Woodstock vibe as fans roared at his one-liners. Duran spoke of his sadness of the loss of Ken Buchanan and Marvin Hagler, but pledged to live to 100! (He is now 72).

Vinny Paz stopped by to talk to me, which was great. He has long campaigned for a spot in the Hall of Fame and he is on the ballot, but yet to be voted in. To me, he blamed veteran boxing writer Dan Rafael, but at the banquet, he went in on Ed Brophy, the Hall of Fame's president.

Some felt Paz went too far, some felt it was hilarious. I was nearer the latter. I don't think he meant any harm, but he said: "I want to get in the Hall of Fame, I think I deserved it. Ed can't put you in? It's not Ed's thing? Wait a minute, the last time I looked, Ed was the president of this organisation. Am I correct or not? So, he's the president, not the vice-president, not the treasurer, not the secretary of state. He's the president of the Hall of Fame, and he can't put me in? Ed, be careful when you come around me, because I've had a couple of drinks and you might get knocked out!"

The crowd laughed, mostly. Brophy and Paz embraced and the evening moved along.

The banquet is not the most interactive experience. The top table, with all of the boxing luminaries, stretches the length of an entire ballroom and the guests are on circular tables around the room. After the meal, there are countless speeches – too many, really. All of the inductees talk, but they should be saving their best lines for the induction the next day.

Perhaps the best moment came when Jimmy Lennon Jr announced a cross-generational head-to-head and he summoned Bradley and Duran for a face-off. There was magic in the air.

Post-banquet, many fighters made their way down to the casino sportsbook and the big screens to watch the Josh Taylor-Teofimo Lopez fight. I was with Froch and McCracken, but spent time with Micky Ward, Dicky Eklund, John Scully, Mercer and some others as Teofimo dazzled us.

#### SUNDAY

All of the inductees went to the museum to have their formal photos taken with their plaques, and the always-popular parade carried the fighters and guests through the village of Canastota, which comes to a standstill to watch. This year's grand marshal was rapper Flavor Flav, and the fighters were then taken back to the Turning Stone for the inductions. Marquez's speech was short and direct, Bradley's meaningful, Froch got in his '80,000 fans' line, but Top Rank matchmaker Brad Goodman stole the show, proposing to his girlfriend. "When people ask me what was the best match I ever made, she's sitting next to me today, and for the rest of my life. Vivian Fierro-Rojas, will you marry me?"

#### HALL OF FAME NOTES

Seeing McCracken and Froch together all weekend was heartwarming. They did it all together, from pro debut to the Hall of Fame; Bernard Fernandez should have been inducted three years ago, but twice he could not attend because of the pandemic, and last year the Philly sportswriting legend's wife was told she had cancer and only 12 months to live. Ann will need chemotherapy for the rest of her life, but 14 months on and Bernard was formally inducted and Ann was there to see it; For the first time, iconic UK duo Chas and Kymberly Taylor didn't exhibit at the memorabilia show and many noted how it was more sparse for vendors than in previous years; I caught up with former heavyweight Kevin McBride, who was on the grounds with his son on the Saturday; Marquez is best known for his four fights with Israel Vazquez, who was on the ballot but did not get in this year. Fans of their wars hoped they might go in together; Three members of the 1988 US Olympic team were there, Mercer, Carbajal and Riddick Bowe: Andrew Golota was in attendance but didn't seem to want to be. The Polish heavyweight walked around with menace in his eyes all weekend and when I shook his hand – his fist was like a shoulder of lamb – he looked like he would have rather put it through my face; Providing he doesn't fight again beforehand, Manny Pacquiao will be eligible to be inducted in next year. **BN**



# ACTION

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★ FAIR ★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ RUBBISH

Reporters' star ratings for main events and undercards are based on in-ring entertainment, competitiveness and whether overall expectation was met

Photos: ED MULHOLLAND/MATCHROOM

**RUN FOR COVER:**  
Zorrilla is on the defensive, and Prograis can do little about it



# UNCONVINCING

Prograis doesn't impress but, even so, the judge who scored for Zorrilla was watching a different fight



**Declan Warrington**  
@decwarrington  
**RINGSIDE**

NEW ORLEANS  
JUNE 17

★★★★☆ MAIN EVENT  
★★★★☆ UNDERCARD  
★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE

**L**ESS than an hour after he had been declared the victor of his fight with **Danielito Zorrilla** via split-decision, New Orleans' **Regis**

**Prograis** began to explain that he had suffered with the "hometown jitters". The fight, for his WBC super-lightweight title and in front of a crowd of 6,319 at the Smoothie King Center, had come against an unambitious opponent he'd had a month to prepare

for after an Achilles injury had forced Liam Paro's withdrawal. It was on May 6 when Prograis was officially unveiled as a Matchroom fighter; it was therefore also only shortly before then when the date of June 17 was agreed. That seven days earlier one divisional rival, in Teofimo Lopez, had been so outstanding in outpointing another in Josh Taylor also perhaps did little to help the 34-year-old Prograis' focus. Above all else, however, for all of his nerves and the pressure he felt to perform on the occasion of his first fight in his home city for five years, against Zorrilla he demonstrated that despite his undoubted talent, he does not convince when needing to cut off the ring. There came a moment in the fight between David Haye and Audley Harrison in 2010 when Haye chose to run towards the challenger who had

been so reluctant to engage with him. When Floyd Mayweather, on the night in 2017 of his equally farcical fight with Conor McGregor, realised that McGregor was in survival mode, he, too, abandoned his instincts to walk McGregor down. When it became clear that Zorrilla was equally committed to remaining on the back foot, Prograis instead proved either incapable of, or unwilling to, attempt anything differently. At his finest, he is a stylish, athletic and charismatic fighter, but if he is to be matched with Lopez, Devin Haney – whose father, trainer and manager Bill was ringside to watch him – or Jack Catterall, he will have to demonstrate considerably more. He had been considerably less willing to recognise that he had been knocked down in the opening round – which in turn contributed to his performance. He had hurt the 29-year-old Zorrilla with a left hand narrowly before the Puerto



Rican threw a right, causing Prograis to fall at the underdog's feet while, when reaching his arms around him in the process of falling, also dragging his opponent to the canvas. Referee Ray Corona wrongly ruled that Prograis had been pushed, but Prograis knew otherwise – as was demonstrated when he chose to take the second round off.

It was in the third when he briefly demonstrated how good he can still be. From almost nowhere, Prograis landed an explosive left hand to Zorrilla's chin, which proved enough to drop him heavily even without it landing cleanly. When his opponent returned to his feet and retreated, Prograis attempted to force the stoppage by unloading on him in the corner, but as quickly as he realised Zorrilla wasn't again about to fall, he showed his experience and patience by instead backing off.

Through Zorrilla, from Toa Baja, was fighting with little conviction and Prograis was attempting to probe his defence, it still took until the sixth round for him to again impress.

After reaching and landing with a left hand, he succeeded in narrowing the distance between them and let his hands go to his body. His success in then briefly reading Zorrilla suggested he would gradually come closer to making the statement he had targeted, but instead, until it was officially confirmed that he had won in front of his home crowd, that was as positive as his night became.

There were further instances of him launching and missing with further left hands, such as in the seventh, and in the ninth he fell short with both a right and a left aimed at the body and then with a jab. In the 10th he attempted to counter a right with a left but again fell short of the type of contact that might have threatened the stoppage he needed; as much as his inability to regularly close the distance between them, he also struggled to judge it when forced to fight at range.

For all that he didn't convince, *Boxing News* regardless struggled to identify how Craig Metcalfe had scored Zorrilla, close to a passenger, a 114-113 winner. Josef Mason's 117-110 and Robert Tapper's 118-109 were at least just.

The welterweight fight between **Shakhram Giyasov** and Chicago's **Harold Calderon** was even less entertaining. Giyasov had 'Wonder Boy' emblazoned across his shorts and

Calderon an even bigger 'King', but at no point during those 12 tedious rounds did it become clear why. Under the supervision of the referee Rafael Ramos, respective scores of 120-108, 118-110 and 116-112 were awarded by Javier Alvarez, Robert Holy and Octavio Rodriguez in favour of Giyasov, the Brooklyn-based Uzbek.

On the otherwise entertaining and competitive undercard, **Ramla Ali** lost for the first time when she was knocked out in the eighth round of a bruising affair with **Julissa Alejandra Guzman**, of Sonora, Mexico. The fifth round had been her most convincing until Ali, the Somali who fights out of Greenwich, was dropped by a well-timed right hand and fortunate that the bell rung shortly after she returned to her feet.

A left to the chin, which followed another, dropped her so heavily in the eighth it was immediately obvious she wouldn't recover.

The stoppage, under the referee Keith Hughes' instruction, was timed at 42 seconds.

**Jeremy Hill**, another fighter from New Orleans, also recorded an eye-catching stoppage when he stopped Baton Rouge's **Mark Davis** 89 seconds into the fourth round. Three successive hurtful right hands forced a knockdown and the intervention of Terry Boudreaux, the referee.

Boudreaux also oversaw **Ginny Fuchs**, of Houston, being awarded respective scores of 79-73, 80-72 and 80-72 from

**STINKER:**  
**Giyasov [left] and Calderon put on 12 soporific rounds**



Larry Berger, Keith Hughes and Keith Thibodeaux in her fight with New Orleans' **Indeya Smith**.

Hughes, in turn, was the referee when Albuquerque's **Xavier Madrid** earned a split decision over **Aaron Aponte**, of Hialeah, Florida, via Mr Berger's, Mr Boudreaux's and Mr Thibodeaux's respective scores of 73-78, 76-75 and 76-75 after Aponte had been deducted a point for repeated low blows.

LA's **Criztec Bazaldua** earlier defeated Elroy Fruto of Surrey, Canada, via unanimous decision. Mr Boudreaux was the referee; Mr Berger, Mr Hughes and Mr Thibodeaux all scored 40-36 in his favour.

**THE VERDICT Prograis can still compete at the highest level – he just needs the right opponent.**



## FULL RESULTS

**Regis Prograis** (139lbs), 29-1 (24) w pts 12 **Danielito Zorrilla** (139lbs), 17-2 (13); **Shakhram Giyasov** (146lbs), 14-0 (9) w pts 12 **Harold Calderon** (146½lbs), 27-1 (18); **Julissa Alejandra Guzman** (121lbs), 13-2-2 (7) w ko 8 **Ramla Ali** (122lbs) 8-1 (2); **Jeremy Hill** (135½lbs), 19-3 (12) w tko 4 **Mark Davis** (135½lbs) 19-2 (5); **Ginny Fuchs** (113½lbs), 3-0 (1) w pts 8 **Indeya Smith** (113½lbs), 6-8-2 (1); **Xavier Madrid** (138½lbs), 5-2 (2) w pts 8 **Aaron Aponte** (140lbs), 7-1-1 (2); **Criztec Bazaldua** (136½lbs), 2-0 w pts 4 **Elroy Fruto** (135½lbs), 1-2.

**FIRST REVERSE:**  
**Ali is flattened by Guzman**



# SUMMER SCHOOL

⊕ BETHNAL GREEN

JUNE 16

★★☆☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

EVERY prospect needs the kind of test that **Mariusz Wach** gave **Frazer Clarke**, but that doesn't make such contests worthy of topping a televised bill. But Boxxer and Sky Sports, after intended headliner Adam Azim pulled out days before with an injury, were left with little choice if the bill was to survive and the fighters who were fit were to get paid.

In a contest that doesn't require watching ever again, nor analysing too deeply, Clarke won every minute of every round to score a 100-90 victory against a podgy stalwart whose ring walk attire did absolutely nothing to disguise a physique that told a tale on his preparation. Nor did the ludicrously hot conditions inside York Hall, as the sweat glued his vest to every unbecoming crevice.

Burton-on-Trent's Clarke – looking comparatively svelte – jabbed with authority and landed plenty of meaty right hands which had little effect on the Pole, a boxer known for both his durability and his tendency to grab hold whenever the action gets a little too tasty.

Regardless of the bout's failure to excite, it should ultimately serve Clarke well as he moves forward with 10 rounds banked. That he did so in such uncomfortably hot conditions is another nod to the stamina he'll need to draw from against better, more willing opposition. The referee was Mark Bates.

The best-matched fight on the card was won by Smithborough's **Aaron McKenna**, who outpointed Angola's **Uisma Lima** over 10 at middleweight. The 23-year-old prospect was tagged a little too often, particularly in the early going, but proved too good for the previously unbeaten Lima, despite ending the bout with a badly swollen right eye.

Photo: LAWRENCE LUSTIG/BOXXER



Inside a  
horribly hot  
York Hall,  
prospects tick  
over and learn  
a bit along  
the way

Lima had success with his left hand, that he drilled through the middle, but McKenna's industry made him a worthy winner. The scores at the end were 100-91 (Eddie Pappoe), 98-93 (Victor Loughlin) and 98-92 (Fabian Guggenheim) as Kevin Parker refereed.

Another who coped well inside the East End cauldron was Londoner **Caroline Dubois**. The Shane McGuigan-trained starlet is not nearly the finished article, but could likely win a world belt tomorrow. She decked Argentina's tough and experienced **Yanina del Carmen Lescano** in round five with a looping right to the head and, though made to work hard, bossed every other moment of their eight-rounder. Referee Sean McAvoy scored this one 80-71. Unsurprisingly, Dubois complained about the heat at the end. And so she should; though the claustrophobic venue is held in high regard it is nonetheless no place for fist-fighting in the thick of a heatwave.

Tottenham's **Viddal Riley**, who could class himself as an 'influencer' should he choose to, again admirably embraced the nitty gritty of this boxing business as he rematched the tough but crude **Anees Taj** in a cruiserweight eight-rounder. Taj, who wouldn't have looked out of place as the villain in a 1980s James Bond movie, had given Riley plenty to think about in February before being stopped on a cut.

Though this return wasn't exactly Ali-Frazier II, it was a worthwhile rematch and one that exhibited Riley's dedication to his trade. A huge left hook sent Taj

sprawling in the fourth and persuaded the Watford fighter's corner to throw in the towel, accepted by Mr Bates at 2-36.

Brixton's **Isaac Chamberlain** looked a little uninterested for parts of his eight-round points win over Frenchman **Dylan Bregeon** but was still a class above. At the end, Sean McAvoy scored 78-74.

English super-welterweight champion **Sam Gilley**, from nearby Walthamstow, orchestrated the best punch of the night when he blasted out Darlington's **Ellis Corrie** in the sixth of an eight. A savage left plunged into Corrie's stomach before Mr Bates counted him out at 2-52.

Slough's **Hassan Azim** was the evening's quickest winner, taking just 95 seconds to dispose of Colombia's overmatched **Ruben Angulo**. Winless in his previous six, Angulo never looked like breaking the trend as he went down from a right hand and was being pummelled when Mr McAvoy stepped in.

The same official scored every round to Ilford's promising **Joshua Gustave**, including a 10-8 tally in the sixth and final session after the Londoner decked Frenchman **Remi Scholer** with a left to the body.

Another points winner was Salford's **Roman Fury** – Tyson's brother – who outworked Belgium's woeful **Erik Nazaryan** over four for a 40-36 nod (Mr Bates).

**THE VERDICT** Some worthwhile tests, but without a competitive fight, this bill was a disappointment.

## FULL RESULTS

**Frazer Clarke** (270lbs), 7-0 (5), w pts 10 **Mariusz Wach** (191¼lbs), 37-10 (20); **Aaron McKenna** (160lbs), 17-0 (8), w pts 10 **Uisma Lima** (157lbs), 10-1 (8); **Isaac Chamberlain** (206lbs), 15-2 (8), w pts 8 **Dylan Bregeon** (204lbs), 13-4-1 (3); **Caroline Dubois** (136¼lbs), 7-0 (5), w pts 8 **Yanina del Carmen Lescano** (137¼lbs), 13-3 (4); **Viddal Riley** (198lbs), 9-0 (6), w rsf 4 **Anees Taj** (200lbs), 7-4 (5); **Sam Gilley** (156lbs), 16-1 (8), w ko 6 **Ellis Corrie** (158lbs), 7-2-1 (2); **Hassan Azim** (153lbs), 7-0 (4), w rsf 1 **Ruben Angulo** (151lbs), 8-7-2 (4); **Joshua Gustave** (159lbs), 5-0, w pts 6 **Remi Scholer** (157lbs), 3-6; **Roman Fury** (204lbs), 2-0, w pts 4 **Erik Nazaryan** (207lbs), 29-33-4 (22).



# ASH THE BASH

Underdog Lane in destructive mood as he claims the title to revitalise his career

## FULL RESULTS

**Ashley Lane** (118lbs), 17-10-2 (2), w rtd 7 **Jordan Purkiss** (117lbs), 6-1 (1); **Jack Martin** (153lbs), 8-1 (3), w rsf 8 **Ryan Maycock** (154lbs), 7-3 (1); **Kevin Reavell** (162lbs), 4-2 (2), w rsf 1 **Rod Douglas Jnr** (159lbs), 4-6; **Nathan Cummiskey** (146lbs), 6-1-1 (2), d pts 6 **Greyvin Mendoza** (146lbs), 7-5-2 (5); **Harvey Horn** (117lbs), 11-1 (2), w pts 6 **Stephen Jackson** (117lbs), 1-35-1 (1); **James Osborne** (168lbs), 4-0 (1), w pts 6 **Fernando Valencia** (167lbs), 9-52 (5); **Thomas Galbraith** (153lbs), 3-0, w pts 4 **Berman Sanchez** (156lbs), 30-45-4 (22); **Tyrone King** (161lbs), 4-0, w pts 4 **Joe Hardy** (158lbs), 2-12; **Jurell Patterson** (163lbs), 2-0-1 (1), w rsf 2 **Vasif Mamedov** (164lbs), 3-37-4; **Ronnie Nickolds** (136lbs), 3-0, w pts 4 **Ricky Leach** (142lbs), 3-65-1; **Zachary Phee** (120lbs), 1-0, w pts 4 **Nabil Ahmed**, 1-20-2.

⊕ BRENTWOOD

JUNE 17

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE

THERE was little to suggest, during the see-saw early stages of the English bantamweight title clash between Stanford-le-Hope champion **Jordan Purkiss** and Bristol challenger **Ashley Lane**, that the bout was about to be turned on its head. That was exactly what happened, though, as on no fewer than three occasions during the third round, the champion found himself on the canvas. Though he somehow managed to make it through to the bell, it left him with a mighty hill to climb.

Not that Jordan didn't try to reduce the deficit – a crashing right late in the fourth hit home, as did a right downstairs early in the next, as Ashley lost his gumshield a second time. But he wasn't going to see his hard work undone and he was still the busier and fresher looking when, late in the seventh, the champion emerged from a clash nursing a nasty cut above the left eye.

The end proved somewhat odd, with the Purkiss corner retiring their man at the end of the session rather than seeing it go to the cards due to the injury coming from an accidental head clash. It was only going one way, though, if the judges had a say at that point. Bob Williams refereed.

Southminster super-welter **Jack Martin** hung on to his Southern Area title courtesy of an eighth-round stoppage victory over Chorleywood's **Ryan Maycock**, but he had to come from behind with the challenger, unconventional at times, having the better of the oft-scrappy early stages.

By the fourth round, however, the balance was starting to swing back towards the champion and, having enjoyed a productive fifth, he sent the still-game yet slowing Maycock wheeling across the ring with a right cross late in the sixth.

There were a few seconds' respite for Ryan in the next while his gumshield was replaced, but the end was approaching and, when Jack followed a right downstairs with a heavy left to leave the challenger sagging against the ropes, referee Mark Bates called a halt with 15

seconds of the eighth still to run.

Stoppages don't come much quicker than the one secured by South Ockendon's **Kevin Reavell**, who needed all of 23 seconds of a scheduled six to account for Bow middleweight **Rod Douglas Jnr**. After initially being clobbered by a glancing left, Douglas was sent over backwards by a right to the chin, an action prompting the immediate intervention of referee Mr Bates.

Two sixes that did go the distance saw Wickford's **James Osborne** and Chigwell's **Harvey Horn** victorious, over Mexican **Fernando Valencia** and Manchester's **Stephen Jackson**, respectively. Osborne triumphed 60-53 for referee Bates, dropping the visitor with a left early in the penultimate round, but he didn't escape unscathed, picking up a cut above the eye late on. Horn, meanwhile, having his first bout in just over a year, mixed things up nicely and shook off a little rust prior to taking every round on the card of referee Williams.

Newcastle welter **Nathan Cummiskey** found another Nicaraguan, **Greyvin Mendoza**, in fighting mood and, at the conclusion of a feisty, nip and tuck six refereed by Mark Bates, he had to settle for a 57-57 share of the spoils.

Stocky two-fight Londoner **Jurell Patterson** had an early night, needing just a round and a half of a scheduled four to see off the challenge of bearded Russian **Vasif Mamedov**, referee Bates waving a halt with 95 seconds of the second session having elapsed and Mamedov having just risen after being floored by a right.

Harlow lightweight **Ronnie Nickolds** maintained his 100 per cent record with a particularly one-sided 40-36 victory over Westbrook journeyman **Ricky Leach**. Bob Williams was the third man.

Cutting off the ring from an early stage, Sittingbourne debutant **Zachary Phee** banked a debut victory with referee Williams awarding him a 39-37 win over Batley's **Nabil Ahmed**, who had his moments but not enough of them.

Two further fours finished 40-36 for the home corner. First up, in a match refereed by Mr Bates, Sittingbourne's **Tyrone King** kept it at arms' length and took every round against Leeds battler **Joe Hardy**, while in another overseen by Mr Williams, Hackney's **Thomas Galbraith**, nice and relaxed, bettered Nicaraguan **Berman Sanchez**, who seldom showed any real appetite for a fight.

**THE VERDICT** Lane, seemingly having been around forever, is fully deserving of victory.



ENGLAND'S GLORY: Lane overcomes the odds, and Father Time, to lift the belt



# OWEN BOMBS BROWN

And Hennon's shocked by Fields, writes Simon Euan-Smith

⊕ BETHNAL GREEN

JUNE 17

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

★★★★☆ ATMOSPHERE

**JACK OWEN** won the vacant Southern Area light-heavyweight title, halting Ramsgate's **Paul 'Bomber' Brown** in four rounds at York Hall.

Owen (Bromley) landed a burst to the head in Brown's corner, and although Brown got away, he was quickly trapped in a neutral corner, where Owen let fly with both hands. With nothing coming back, referee Reece Carter made a well-judged stoppage at 1-57.

It was southpaw Brown's first bout since March 2022, but he didn't seem rusty. He moved fluidly, inviting Owen to come to him – and when Owen landed two fair body shots in the first, Brown moved away smartly.

Both found it hard to land cleanly in the second, but an Owen attack in the third had Brown grabbing on, and a big right to the head staggered him to the ropes. But he hit back gamely – and with some success – as Owen followed up.

Owen landed a burst in close in the

fourth, while Brown looked to stand off and jab – but once Owen started unloading again, the end came quickly.

Both were unbeaten going in – Brown on seven wins, Owen on five against two draws, both against Lewis van Poetsch. It was Owen's first inside-schedule win – and good to see the pair embrace as the official verdict was announced.

The second 10-rounder on this Goodwin Promotions bill was over even more quickly, Birmingham's **Ben Fields** needing just 2-05 to dispose of Snodland's **George Hannon** in their English super-lightweight title eliminator. It was a shock – Hennon had won eight of nine going in, while Fields' 11-13-4 tally included a three-round KO loss to Jamie Robinson here in his last outing. And he had never won early.

Fields started aggressively, while Hennon stood off and jabbed. It looked as though Hennon was wrestled down, but referee Carter took up a count. There was no arguing, though, with the left hook to the body that dropped Hennon again. Then a huge right to the head sent him down on his back and Mr Carter waved it off at once. Hennon was treated given oxygen in the ring, but thankfully recovered after a few minutes.

Having lost all his previous 37 bouts in the UK, Venice-based Nicaraguan **Cristian Narvaez** caused something of a surprise by holding Kingsbury's **Jerome Campbell** to a four-round draw.

One punch proved crucial – a left counter to the head that dropped Campbell for "one" in the second. Southpaw Narvaez followed up, and Campbell held, but he was back on top by the end, with Narvaez covering up on the ropes.

A burst from Campbell had Narvaez holding on in the third, and Narvaez moved away as Campbell attached with both hands. Campbell was warned for a low left in the last, and the bout ended with a fair exchange – Narvaez obviously won the second round by 10-8, but I thought Campbell took the others. But I wouldn't argue with referee Sean McAvoy's 38-38 scoreline.

The remaining six four-rounders saw the home fighters triumph, dropping just two rounds out of 24.

**Lewis Oakford** (High Wycombe) gave away a whopping 50lbs to Swindon's **Phil Williams**, but boxed his way to a convincing 39-37 win from referee McAvoy.

Williams used the right tactics, leaning on whenever he could, but Oakford jabbed sharply, scoring consistently through the middle, and a left-right and following right had Williams holding on in the second. Oakford bled from the nose, and sustained a cut in the corner of the right eyebrow in the third, but made sure of victory with a dominant last round, repeatedly finding the target.

Luton's **Albano Junior** floored Melksham centurion **Liam Richards** in the first, from a right, and used his extra reach to take referee Carter's verdict by 40-35.

**Timon Douglin** (Reading) made it four straight wins with a 40-36 win over **Dylan Courtney** (Penzance), referee McAvoy scoring 40-36.

Courtney came to fight, but was generally outworked. Douglin used his height and reach advantages and ended the bout with a flourish, landing four rights to the head in the closing seconds.

Londoner **Pat Gill** also used a reach advantage to best Worcester's **Michael Mooney**, referee Carter scoring 40-36.

Crawley switch-hitter **Sher Khan** outscored Sheffield's **Karl Sampson** by 39-37 (McAvoy), and debutant **Hamzah Butt** (Southend) beat Newark's **Fonz Alexander** by 40-36 (Carter).

**THE VERDICT** Formbook counts for nothing in both top-liners.

## FULL RESULTS

**Jack Owen** (170lbs 6ozs), 6-0-2 (1), w tko 4 **Paul Brown** (174½lbs), 7-1: **Ben Fields** (139lbs 2ozs), 12-13-4 (1), w tko 1 **George Hennon** (138lbs 5ozs), 8-2 (2); **Sher Khan** (137lbs), 4-0, w pts 4 **Karl Sampson** (138lbs), 5-20-1 (1); **Pat Gill** (141lbs), 5-0 (1), w pts 4 **Michael Mooney** (143lbs), 9-95-2 (3); **Jerome Campbell** (134lbs), 7-1-1 (1), d pts 4 **Cristian Narvaez** (138lbs), 17-63-7 (2); **Albano Junior** (137lbs), 4-0, w pts 4 **Liam Richards** (138lbs), 12-90 (1); **Lewis Oakford** (205lbs), 3-0, w pts 4 **Phil Williams** (255lbs), 6-46-1 (1); **Hamzah Butt** (145lbs), 1-0, w pts 4 **Fonz Alexander** (150lbs), 8-146-1 (4); **Timon Douglin** (181lbs), 4-0, w pts 4 **Dylan Courtney** (183lbs), 2-2-2 (1).

Photo: GOODWIN PROMOTIONS





SCRIPT FOLLOWED:  
Ambomo [left] can  
be dangerous, but  
not on this night

Photo: DEXTER HASTINGS/BCB PROMOTIONS



# Home wins

Three out of three for BCB boxers, including an early night for Troy Jones

⊕ BIRMINGHAM

JUNE 16

★★★☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

THE first of two consecutive BCB Promotions went ahead in front of the diners at the Holiday Inn on Birmingham's Queensway and saw the home corner rewarded with two distance victories and one early finish.

The early night was had by heavy-handed local light-heavy **Troy Jones** (180lbs 3oz) who, having floored York operator **Harry Matthews** (184lbs 1oz) with a left downstairs in the dying embers of the third, finished the job at 1-37 of the next, with Harry having been down from more body shots and his corner pulling him out. Troy improves to 7-0 (4).

Worcester lightweight **Ameen Khalid** (134lbs 5oz) was adjudged a narrow 57-56 winner over Oldbury southpaw **Jahfieus Faure** (134lbs 3oz) by referee for the night Chris Dean, but he had to come from behind, having been tagged off balance and sent over by a right late in the second. There were no such troubles for Exeter welter **Shannon Willey** (152lbs 5oz) who, having drawn last time out, returned to winning ways with a 40-36 success against Blackburn centurion **Naeem Ali** (152½lbs).

# NO FIREWORKS

Kelly banks a win, but it's far from a classic

⊕ BIRMINGHAM

JUNE 17

★★☆☆☆ WHOLE SHOW

THE PACE in the six-round nominal bill-topper between returning local favourite **Ryan Kelly** and Sheffield's **Serge Ambomo** at the Eastside Rooms seldom rose above pedestrian and though Kelly, in charge for the most part and scoring with a couple of decent right uppercuts, ultimately took the 59-55 decision of referee for the night Jamie Kirkpatrick, the bout won't linger long in the memory.

Cameroonian Serge, out again this weekend, certainly wasn't the dangerous opponent he can sometimes be, though his cause wasn't helped when he took a thumb to the eye in the third.

Shutout wins over six came the way of Stourbridge's **Jake Melvin** and Birmingham-based Syrian **Kutaiba Jimenez** in welterweight bouts against overseas opposition. Melvin, pressing from the off and busy behind the jab, saw off Sofia's **Georgi Velichkov**, while in a quieter affair, Jimenez, who is yet to drop a round as a pro, emerged victorious against Russia's **Rustem Fatkhullin**.

Brierley Hill's **MJ Hall** suffered a 100th career loss, 40-36 at the hands of Lincoln's **Jamie Behan**, who had missed out a week earlier

when his bout at Leicester had to be shelved due to another boxer on the card being taken to hospital.

That scoreline was mirrored in another home-versus-veteran encounter as Chelmsley Wood light-heavyweight **Brandon Jones** eased to victory over Middleton centurion **Darryl Sharp**.

There was victory in the away corner, and deservedly so, when Chatham's Zimbabwean-born **Tatenda Mangombe**, with only one win in eight to his credit going in, handed Walsall's **Lewis Morris** a first loss in seven. Mr Kirkpatrick scored 40-36 in favour of the more ambitious visitor, who battled from the first bell right through to the last.

There was debut joy for Dudley Port's **Jasmin Harmitt**, who beat gutsy **Katowice Angelika Oles** 40-37 in a four-twos lightweight sprint that was a little closer than the score suggests.

FULL RESULTS

**Ryan Kelly** (159lbs 5oz), 17-4 (8), w pts 6 **Serge Ambomo** (159lbs 5oz), 10-46-3 (4); **Jake Melvin** (147½lbs), 4-0, w pts 6 **Georgi Velichkov** (145lbs 2oz), 3-15-1 (3); **Kutaiba Jimenez** (149lbs 3oz), 3-0, w pts 6 **Rustem Fatkhullin** (147lbs 9oz), 8-63 (3); **Brandon Jones** (183lbs 5oz), 8-0 (4), w pts 4 **Darryl Sharp** (179¼lbs), 7-112-1 (1); **Jasmin Harmitt** (137lbs 5oz), 1-0, w pts 4 **Angelika Oles** (138lbs 1oz), 2-5 (1); **Tatenda Mangombe** (133lbs), 2-7, w pts 4 **Lewis Morris** (130¼lbs), 6-1; **Jamie Behan** (153lbs 2oz), 3-0, w pts 4 **MJ Hall** (154lbs 6oz), 3-100-2.



BACK ON TRACK:  
Giles shrugs off his  
first defeat with a  
dominant win here

# Talking point

Another fight that calls current scoring system into question, writes Charlie Tymon from ringside

 GLASGOW

JUNE 17

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

JUST two weeks on from claiming the Scottish super-welterweight title, Arbroath's **Corey McCulloch** was back in action and won every minute against **Richard Helm**, utilising light taps and feints to make space for hard shots throughout, and regularly scoring with long corkscrewing uppercuts.

The one reversal of flow came in the second when Rochdale's Helm, catching McCulloch out of position, landed a counter to score a flash knockdown. McCulloch, no stranger to these, was up and straight back to business and a stoppage looked to be coming in the final round when Helm, taking a shellacking, fired back just enough to avoid referee Kenny Pringle's intervention. The 58-55 scorecard from Mr Pringle, who refereed all three fights, showed McCulloch's dominance, but the 10-8 interpretation of the second could have had real implications in a tighter affair. Another fight that demonstrates a review of the scoring system is overdue.

In his first fight of 2023, Balloch's **Xander Savage** shook off the ring rust against Manchester's durable **Harley Marginson**. From the opening seconds, Savage threw fast-handed combinations to Marginson's head in order to raise his guard and follow up with vicious body shots to both floating ribs. Marginson, to his credit, would not wilt and stuck with it to hear the final bell.

The opener featured a very cautious display from **Mohammad (Kaseem) Saleem** against Blackpool's **Jake Darnell**. It was difficult to judge if any punch had scored in the first and, such as Kaseem's reticence in throwing leather, Darnell decided to have a go in the second and looked to take the round. This gave Saleem impetus to do enough to claim a 59-55 victory but, with Jay McFarlane calling him out from ringside and that fight coming in September, he will need to improve his work rate.

## FULL RESULTS

**Corey McCulloch** (156 lbs), 7-3-1 (2), w pts 6 **Richard Helm** (156lbs), 1-18-1 (1); **Xander Savage** (148lbs), 4-0 (1), w pts 4 **Harley Marginson** (145lbs), 0-7; **Mohammad Saleem** (296lbs), 5-0 (1), w pts 6 **Jake Darnell** (254lbs).

Photo: FIGHTZONE TV



# COCK OF THE DOCK

Andy Whittle watches Giles bounce back from English title loss to Michael Gomez

 GRIMSBY

JUNE 17

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

PRO boxing returned to Grimsby for the first time in 11 years, with Carl Greaves serving up a cracker at the Auditorium. In front of his noisy supporters, home favourite **Levi Giles** turned on the style, halting out-of-his-depth Russian **Ruslan Berchuk** 41 seconds into the fifth of a scheduled eight.

Second best from the off, the man from St Petersburg had been lucky to survive an onslaught late in the fourth but was soon despatched after a pair of uppercuts and a right cross early in the next brought the intervention of third man Kevin Parker.

An eight that pitched two boxers with 100 per cent records in against other saw Scunthorpe's **James Richardson** get the better of Swindon's **Jensen Irving**. Mr Parker, scoring from ringside for trialist Ryan Churchill having it 80-73 at the finish.

The jab proved the key for James against his wild-haired opponent and, interwoven with bursts upstairs, it proved both regular and accurate.

Debut wins came the way of Grimsby's **Shaydon Walmsley** and Boston's **Harvey Elding**, the former taking all four rounds on

the card of referee Parker, having dominated against Hyde's **Dale Arrowsmith**, and the latter impressing mightily in wearing down and ultimately halting Bolton's **Kiernan McAfee** with 30 seconds of their scheduled four still to run. Mr Churchill quite rightly deemed enough was enough.

A feisty bout over six between Grimsby's **Kirsty Hill** and Bolton's Central Area champion, **Linzi Buczynskyj**, was won 59-56 by the local. More measured, Kirsty looked to keep it long behind the jab, but Linzi never stopped looking for a gap and her best work came late.

Dubliner **Paddy Walsh**, looking sharp throughout and maintaining quite a pace, got a one-sided 40-36 win over Manchester's **John Spencer**, while Hull's **Les Urry** had to settle for a 38-38 share at the culmination of his four against Doncaster's **Jake Smith**.

## FULL RESULTS

**Levi Giles** (132¼lbs), 14-1 (4), w rsf 5 **Ruslan Berchuk** (129½lbs), 14-19 (4); **James Richardson** (157¼lbs), 6-0, w pts 8 **Jensen Irving** (155lbs 9oz), 4-1; **Kirsty Hill** (128lbs 3oz), 4-1, w pts 6 **Linzi Buczynskyj** (128½lbs), 4-3; **Shaydon Walmsley** (155lbs 5oz), 1-0, w pts 4 **Dale Arrowsmith** (154lbs 3oz), 5-83-3 (1); **Harvey Elding** (125lbs 2oz), 1-0 (1), w rsf 4 **Kiernan McAfee** (131lbs 6oz), 0-11; **Les Urry** (142½lbs), 1-0-1, d pts 4 **Jake Smith** (145lbs 2oz), 1-4-1; **Paddy Walsh** (143lbs 5oz), 2-0 (1), w pts 4 **John Spencer** (138lbs), 1-35.



# Curse strikes again

Late dropouts hurt the bill but fans still entertained, writes **Allen Payne**

 GLASGOW

JUNE 8

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

THE curse of small hall matchmaking occurred on fight week, meaning two of the planned bouts fell through at the proverbial last minute. The night opened with an exhibition between stablemates Martin Crossan and Jake Limond, ensuring the dinner guests had some action for starters.

Another Willie Limond-trained prospect then made his way to the ring for his professional debut, as **Tyler Simpson** faced **Daryl Pearce**. With an experienced head in his corner, it's no surprise the 18-year-old delivered a performance of maturity. The Glasgow lad used his height and reach advantage well to deliver sharp combinations from out of range. In the second half of the fight, Simpson had success with the right hand, sending the Brummie lad's head snapping on a number of occasions, and then cruising to a shutout victory on Kenny Pringle's scorecard.

A slightly different **Josh Campbell** to the one we're used to headlined against **Rustem Fatkhullin**. Often displaying a box and move style, the Cardonald boxer held the centre of the ring with a more assertive performance, picking his shots and opportunities to work the Southampton-based Russian on the ropes and unleash combinations to the head and body. The home boxer will now be looking to move closer to chasing title fights after Kenny Pringle awarded him a 60-54 win.

The most important fight associated with this Iain Wilson promotion didn't take place in the ring.

Sadly, Hugh Keevins' (broadcaster and St Andrew's Sporting Club Chairman) relative is battling a rare form of cancer and the 50th Anniversary Season Finale was also a fundraiser for the four-year-old.

The boxing community should be applauded for their support – generous, unique auction donations from Matchroom, Boxxer, Ricky Burns and Willie Limond helped raise a significant amount towards helping Calum Rae get the treatment he needs for a chance of survival.

## FULL RESULTS

**Josh Campbell** (145lbs), 6-0, w pts 6 **Rustem Fatkhullin** (145lbs), 8-62 (3); **Tyler Simpson** (150lbs), 1-0, w pts 4 **Daryl Pearce** (151lbs), 1-19.

EVERY ROUND:  
Mould breezes through his eight-rounder  
Photo: NIGEL RODDIS/GETTY IMAGES



# STAYING BUSY

Mould and Padley bid their time with bigger nights looming, writes **Andy Whittle**

 ROTHERHAM

JUNE 16

★★★★☆ WHOLE SHOW

DONCASTER'S **Reece Mould** banked eight at-times scrappy rounds against tough Mexican **Christian Lopez Flores** who, while bested by a distance and counted after going down in the fourth, proved a gutsy foe who seldom looked like succumbing.

Leeds referee Andy Brook scored 80-71 at the finish, rewarding Reece, who mixed it up nicely, for his dominance.

Armthorpe's well-supported **Josh Padley** has an eye on bigger things but contented himself here by taking the 59-55 decision of Preston's Jamie Kirkpatrick at the conclusion of a six against fleet-of-foot Colombian **Victor Julio**.

The visitor did come on a little after receiving a roasting in the fourth for hitting on the break but Padley, pressing behind the jab, bossed it for the most part.

Sheffielder **Faraqat Ali** looked headed for a fairly wide points win going into the fifth of a scheduled six against Shepshed's **Louis Norman** but was then made to dig deep after being visibly hurt by a left. He was subsequently floored by a chopping right late in the penultimate session and came under fire again in the last. Referee was Mr Kirkpatrick.

A proposed four between Oldham's **Will Cawley** and Tanzanian **John Chuwa** was over in a flash, lasting all of 78 seconds before the African, having fallen victim to a right to the head-left to the body combination showed no inclination to rise from one knee to beat the count of referee Andy Brook.

King's Lynn's **Stevi Levy** sneaked home by the narrowest of margins over six. She was too quiet early doors and needed a particularly busy final round to see off Ukrainian southpaw **Svitlana Vasylevska**. Referee Mr Brook scored 58-57 at the finish.

There was a shutout 40-36 win for Conisbrough's unbeaten **Joe Hayden** over Wakefield's heavier **Kristaps Zulgis**, while Hull veteran **Luke Fash**, in against Sheffield's **Nohman Hussain**, retired at the end of the second, having sustained damage by the right eye.

## FULL RESULTS

**Reece Mould** (139½lbs), 18-1 (6), w pts 8 **Christian Lopez Flores** (139lbs), 14-27-2 (12); **Stevi Levy** (122lbs 2oz), 9-1, w pts 6 **Svitlana Vasylevska** (119lbs 6oz), 3-4 (1); **Josh Padley** (136½lbs), 11-0 (1), w pts 6 **Victor Julio** (136lbs 2oz), 16-8 (8); **Joe Hayden** (156lbs), 9-0, w pts 4 **Kristaps Zulgis** (165lbs 11oz), 8-43-3 (4); **Will Cawley** (118½lbs), 3-0 (1), w ko 1 **John Chuwa** (117lbs 6oz), 21-7 (10); **Faraqat Ali** (132lbs 6oz), 7-0, w pts 6 **Louis Norman** (134lbs 2oz), 14-12-1 (2); **Nohman Hussain** (134lbs), 3-0 (2), w rtd 2 **Luke Fash** (134lbs), 3-92-3.





# Tszyu underlines his quality

**STATEMENT MADE:**  
Tszyu blows away  
Ocampo while waiting  
for his shot at Charlo

Photo: CHRIS HYDE/  
GETTY IMAGES

Tim destroys Ocampo, while Goodman enters the world rankings after hard-fought victory in Australia, writes Eric Armit

**JUNE 16**

**MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA**  
**LUCAS MILLER**, 9-5-2 (3), won the vacant Australian light-heavyweight title with a unanimous decision over **Renold Quinlan**, 16-12 (11). Miller had to climb off the floor for his win, with all three judges scoring it 97-92. Quinlan, who has lost inside the distance against Chris Eubank Jr and Joshua Buatsi here, failed to make the weight so could not win the title. A welterweight mismatch saw **Qamil Balla**, 15-1-1 (8), score four knockdowns before his fight with Thai **Atchariya Wirojanasunobol**, 13-2 (5), was stopped in the second round.

**NORTHRIDGE, AUSTRALIA**  
AUSTRALIAN strawweight hope **Alex Winwood**, 3-0 (2), outpointed Nicaraguan **Reyneris Gutierrez**, 9-1 (2). The contest was close over the first three

rounds, but after Winwood put Gutierrez down in the fourth, he was in control. The local 25-year-old represented Australia at the Tokyo Olympics, the 2019 World Championships and 2022 Commonwealth Games.

**ACCRA, GHANA**  
BRADFORD'S **Tasif Khan**, 17-1-2 (9), was too big and punched too hard for Venezuelan **David Barreto**, 17-3 (16). Khan sent Barreto down in the first with a long right to the body. Barreto made it to the bell but was floored three times in the second, being counted out on the third knockdown. Don't be too impressed by Barreto's record, by the way – 14 of his victims had never won a fight.

In a super-bantamweight female match, Nigeria's **Adijat Ghadamosi**, 8-0 (5), floored and stopped Zimbabwean **Patience Mastara**, 5-9-4 (1), in the fifth.

**PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC**  
CRUISERWEIGHTS **Vasil Ducar**, 14-6-2 (10), and **Viktor Trush**, 8-2-1 (8), fought to an incident-filled technical draw.

After a couple of even rounds, a clash of heads in the third saw Ducar cut over his right eye. A wild attack from Trush forced Ducar to his knees. Ducar made it to his feet but, with his cut bleeding heavily, Ducar was showered with punches and he went down for a second time. #One more knockdown was all Trush needed but, as he wildly threw punches, he left himself open and a huge left hook sent him to his knees, facing out through the ropes. He made it up and the bell went at the end of the count. What a round.

Ducar initially survived a doctor's inspection, but the cut was bad and the referee rightly stopped the fight in the fourth.



## JUNE 17

🇧🇪 ROOSDAAL, BELGIUM

THE European Union super-bantamweight title changed hands as Italian **Vincenzo La Femina**, 13-0 (7), stopped **Geram Eloyan**, 9-4 (7), in the eighth. La Femina had controlled the fight before dropping Eloyan in the eighth, with the towel coming in from Eloyan's corner.

Super-lightweight **Hovhannes Martirosyan**, 15-0 (9), decisioned former French champion **Hassan Amzile**, 6-3 (1). Martirosyan overcame the height and reach edges enjoyed by Azile to win on scores 97-93 twice and 99-91.

Belgian **Femke Hermans**, 16-4 (7), retained her sanctioning body super-welterweight title when badly faded Swedish challenger **Maria Lindberg**, 20-9-2 (10), retired at the end of the first round, having been floored heavily before the bell. Albanian welterweight **Meriton Karaxha**, 30-7-3 (11), put Hungarian **Zoltan Szabo**, 28-33 (12), down twice with body punches in the fifth, with Szabo counted out on the second knockdown.

🇦🇷 PONTEVEDRA, ARGENTINA  
LIGHTWEIGHT hope **Alan Chaves**, 13-0 (11), again impressed as he halted Venezuelan **Juan Ruiz**, 6-0 (1), in the sixth

round. Chaves had Ruiz down twice in the first round. Ruiz survived but was floored a further two times in the sixth and the fight was stopped.

In a scrap for the vacant Argentinian light-flyweight title, **Aldana Lopez**, 8-0, decisioned **Carolina Ferrari**, 3-2-2. Just 13 seconds into the fight Ferrari landed a right to the head that sent Lopez staggering back and down, but she beat the count and then outboxed Ferrari, winning on scores of 98-92 twice and 99-91.

## JUNE 18

🇦🇺 BROADBEACH, AUSTRALIA

**TIM TSZU**, 23-0 (17), destroyed Mexican **Carlos Ocampo**, 35-3 (23), sending him to the mat twice in the first round. The first punch of the fight was a short right to the head from Tszu which shook Ocampo and had him stumbling. Tszu landed a series of punches, driving Ocampo along the ropes, and a right to the head dropped him to his hands and knees. Ocampo pluckily made it to his feet at eight, but Tszu landed two clubbing rights and then connected with a tremendous left hook that snapped Ocampo's neck back and his body to the floor. The referee immediately curtailed the fight at 77 seconds. An electrifying

performance from Tszu, who is ranked as the second best at super-welter behind champion Jermell Charlo.

There was a pulsating match between unbeaten fighters. **Sam Goodman**, 15-0 (7), and **Ra'eese Aleem**, 20-1 (12), which the former won via split decision. This was a tremendous battle as they traded punches for 12 rounds. Aleem's work inside earned him the first round, but strong jabbing won the second for Goodman. Aleem then swept the next four rounds, outworking Goodman to build a good lead. Over the second half, Goodman just got stronger and stronger, forcing Aleem back and landing the harder punches. Aleem tired and Goodman clawed back Aleem's early lead and finished strongly to be a deserving winner on scores of 117-111 and 116-112 against a score of 116-112 for Aleem. Goodman enters the super-bantamweight rankings at fifth, one place above his opponent.

In an Australian title fight, **Hassan Hamdan**, 6-0 (1), beat super-lightweight champion **Justin Frost**, 13-1-1 (4), on a technical decision. Hamdan suffered a bad cut and the fight was stopped at the end of the fourth. It went to the cards, with all three judges having it 40-36 for Hamdan.

**THAT'S GOOD, MAN:**  
Sam works away  
at Aleem's early  
lead and finishes  
stronger





# “I’M SO HAPPY, MAN”

*Ahead of his first fight under Matchroom, against Jason Quigley in his home city of New York, and at a time when he is being spoken of as a challenger to Canelo Alvarez, Edgar Berlanga tells Declan Warrington about his hopes and dreams*

H

**OW significant is this weekend’s fight, given the grand plans for your future?**

I take all my fights serious, but this one is different. Y’know, this is more personal. After a year off; new promoter, being back with my old team, possibly fighting Canelo this year, there’s a lot that comes into it, man. I’ve been busting my ass at the gym, working on a lot of different things, man. This is either gonna make me or break me, this fight.

Quigley’s a great fighter. You go on social media, people are all talking shit, saying, “This guy’s an Uber driver”. He’s a threat to me and the 168lbs division. He’s going in there as the best version of himself, like everybody did. [Past opponent Roamer Alexis] Angulo came in overweight to have an advantage over me. Every fighter that fights me comes in different. I’m a different fighter; I’m not who I was last year. Last year I was an injured fighter; this year I’m different, man. I feel like the sky’s the limit.

[Someone of Puerto Rican descent fighting an Irishman in New York] is important. You got my sister, Amanda Serrano, that fought Katie Taylor and it did crazy numbers. You seen that it was a crazy, packed house in The Garden. It’s gonna be another night like that. Ireland versus Puerto Rico is something crazy. We’re both warriors – there’s no quit in us, no quit in them. It’s gonna be an amazing night.

**What have you been told about pursuing Saul ‘Canelo’ Alvarez?**

For us to work our way to get to that fight. Y’know, that’s the main goal for anybody in the 168lbs division. He has all the titles, so who wouldn’t want to fight him? That’s something that’s on the horizon, but I gotta handle business; I gotta destroy Quigley; I gotta look the best I’ve ever looked in my career to make that statement.

It was spoken about with Matchroom. “This is the fight that could possibly happen – win impressively, win big.” Focus on the 24th, destroy this guy, look good, perform to my best ability. Then we’ll be talking up that [Canelo] fight.

It could be my next fight. Eddie [Hearn] didn’t say, “Oh, this is gonna be your next fight”, but it’s going around that Canelo and [Dmitrii] Bivol’s fight isn’t happening, David Benavidez is up in the air; him and [Jermall] Charlo’s up in the air. So, people are looking around, wondering who he

could fight next. “Oh shit, Berlanga – Berlanga’s fighting the 24th. Oh, Berlanga’s Puerto Rican. Oh, he’s from New York. Oh, he’s gonna be 21-0. Okay, this is something that could happen. He’s with the same promoter”. It’s easy.

**What did you make of Alvarez’s last performance, against John Ryder?**

He did good. Y’know, he broke John Ryder down. I mean, you seen his face – he [Ryder] was all bloody. Canelo did his thing.

Possibly [he’s in decline]. I seen a little bit of it with Ryder – I just feel like right now, he’s still a king at 168lbs, so everybody’s gonna look at him. He can’t always look that good. Next fight he’ll probably jump back into who he was a year ago; two years ago.

[The Puerto Rico-Mexico rivalry], that’s something big; I know that’s why everybody’s pushing for that. They feel like if they make that fight happen, it’s gonna be crazy sales on pay-per-view.

I actually called [Ryder] out last year – trying to make the fight when I was with Top Rank, and they didn’t want to make the fight happen. He wound up taking a fight with Zach Parker, and then he wound up getting the Canelo fight. That was crazy; we were trying to call out Ryder, not knowing that that fight was leading to the Canelo fight.

He [Alvarez] is crazy [for wanting to fight Bivol in a rematch]. I don’t think that was gonna happen at all. [Bivol] wanted him to come to 168lbs; to fight for all the titles at 168lbs. Canelo wanted to go up to 175lbs – this dude’s a giant at 175lbs. I don’t think he can win [a rematch at 175lbs]. If Bivol drops to 168lbs, I think it’ll be a different outcome, for sure. If Canelo goes back to who he was, I think there’s a possibility [he can win at 168lbs], yeah.

**You and David Benavidez are widely considered to be coming up behind Alvarez. How good a fighter is he?**

He’s a beast. He’s one of the top dogs at 168lbs. He’s proven himself each and every fight. He’s just looking for those big-money fights, and I feel he’s one of the top dogs at 168lbs.

**How much are you relishing having reunited with your trainer Marc Farrait?**

It’s amazing, man. I’ve never been so happy, man. I’m back with the guy that made me, y’know? It’s different when you have a guy that knows you in and out. He’s knows me; he knows what to do to take the best out of me; he’s the guy

that invented that monster instinct inside me, he brought it out of me. I’m looking different, I’m feeling different, I’m in the gym, I’m stopping sparring partners. It’s different, man. My mindset is different, my IQ is different. I’m excited.

Hell yeah, it was a mistake [to split with him]. I feel like if I’d stayed with him I would be in a way different position right now. It was reasons outside of boxing [that led to us splitting]. There was never no beef between me and him; we just had to part ways. When we parted ways, we ended up both deciding that we needed to get back. I see my last fights [without him] and don’t see me – it was weird.

There’s also chemistry. Me leaving him, and going from trainer to trainer, it really hit me that as a fighter, you gotta have chemistry with your coach. That’s so important, man. You have to have a guy that knows you – that knows how to bring the best out of you. If you have a guy that knows how to get the best out of you – that knows what triggers you to get that killer instinct out of you, then that’s the guy you gotta stay with.

My career’s just getting started; it’s a brand new start for me. I’m with a new promoter, I’m back with my old trainer, I’m still fresh. I haven’t taken any punishment in the sport of boxing. You see my face. I’m still me. If I was with Mark, I would’ve been 20-0 with 20 knockouts right now.

**Do you fight with a reduced sense of a pressure since your run of first-round knockouts ended?**

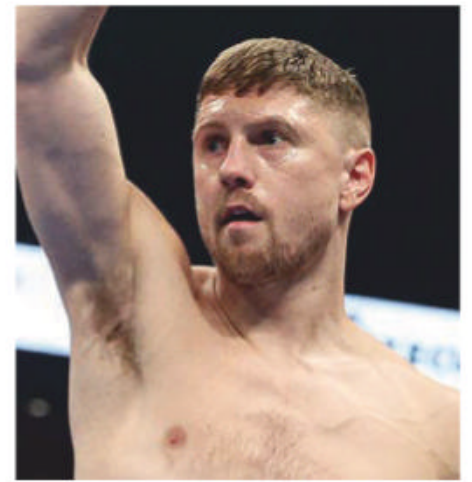
Yeah, for sure. I needed those rounds. At this level you need to go rounds – especially to compete with the [Artur] Beterbievs, the [Jermall] Charlos, the Canelos, the Triple Gs [Gennady Golovkin]. Those dudes have done 12 rounds, 20-plus fights. If I can’t get a 10-rounder in, what good am I? I know that I can go those rounds. I know that I can be in there with the best. That’s what’s most important for me.

I didn’t even know about [first-round knockout artist, the late Edwin Valero] until I started knocking people out in the first round. People were like, “Yo, you could probably beat this guy”. “He’s a beast”, but he was fighting real cab drivers. He was fighting Uber drivers on my app. He was fighting those type of guys. I was fighting guys that fought world champions – look at my Boxrec [page] – I was fighting guys that went the distance with world champions, bro, and I was knocking them out in the first round. That’s the truth.



**'JUST GETTING STARTED':**  
Berlanga has a new  
promoter and has  
reunited with his  
old trainer

Photo: MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK



## QUIGLEY IS A LIVE 'DOG'

DAZN televise an intriguing  
super-middleweight collision  
inside MSG on Saturday night

THOUGH he never really garnered the attention that **Edgar Berlanga** today clearly enjoys, there was a time in the not too distant past when **Jason Quigley**, now 32 years old, was a boxer on the rise who was held in high regard.

The Irishman, from Ballybofey, is a respectable 20-2 (14), but it's the two reverses – stoppage defeats to Tureano Johnson (rtd 9) and Demetrius Andrade (rsf 2) – that currently define him. Though he has 10-round points wins over Shane Mosley Jnr, Glen Tapia and Freddy Hernandez, all evidence points to Quigley struggling at the fringes of world class.

The fact that Berlanga, 20-0 (16), is yet to prove he belongs at the top makes this 12-rounder an interesting one. The New Yorker, incredibly, won his first 16 bouts by first-round stoppage but hasn't really convinced since against more durable opposition. Demond Nicholson, Marcelo Coceres, Steve Rolls and Roamer Alexis Angulo have all heard the final bell since, with each making Berlanga look more ordinary than spectacular.

Though a Quigley victory is already being labelled as unlikely, it would be far from the Upset of the Year if he were to beat the 26-year-old inside Madison Square Garden.

Neither boxer has been particularly active, but Quigley did bank 10 rounds as recently as April, which could help against an opponent who has been out of the ring for more than a year.

Quigley will look to avoid being hurt early and build a lead on the cards behind his fluent and fast hands. But even when on the way up, the boxer who won silver at the amateur Worlds in 2013, has never been hugely elusive.

We expect a close encounter, with the younger man to prevail on home soil, but do not be surprised to see Quigley put it all together at last.



# PREVIEWS

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★★★ FAIR ★★★★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ RUBBISH

The star ratings indicate how well the writer believes the fighters match up, the fight(s)' contextual significance, and how good the fight(s) will be

Photos: NAOKI FUKUDA



## HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Ioka needs to be better than he was last time against Franco to impress his Japanese fans, writes **Matt Bozeat**

★★★★★ WHOLE SHOW

JAPANESE hero **Kazuto Ioka** looks to turn the clock back again when he meets **Joshua Franco** in their rematch in Tokyo on Saturday night. The super-flyweights fought out a majority draw at the same Ota-City General Gymnasium this past New Year's Eve.

Franco, ranked as the fourth best in the world, puts his WBA strap on the line this weekend and the career of Ioka – ranked three – could be at stake as well. The four-weight belt-holder – strawweight (105lbs) to super-flyweight (115lbs) – is now 34 and a veteran of 23 fights in which a sanctioning body title was at stake (20-2-1). Though far from 'shot', it's hard to ignore the signs that he's past his best.

The consensus after the first bout among reporters was that Ioka was fortunate to escape with a draw against the Robert Garcia-trained Texan after an all-action fight. The scores were 115-113 (Franco) and two cards of 114-114. Though never dominant, Franco had the look of the fighter in control. Compubox stats – a useful but not definitive tool – backs that up. They reveal that Franco threw more in every round, but Ioka

landed a higher percentage in every session.

According to those Compubox calculations, they threw 2,209 punches at each other, with Franco averaging 117 per round, compared to Ioka's 66. The stats don't show that Franco was always on the front foot and, when his punches landed, they had greater effect.

Franco, who has fought up at 118lbs, looked the stronger of the two and was able to push Ioka back onto the ropes. Even when there, Ioka wasn't easy to catch cleanly and always looked to score with counters, notably a whipping right in answer to Franco's jab and left hooks to the body, and for us, he outpunched Franco in the 10th when they went traded in the centre of the ring before the American went up a gear in the last six minutes.

Watching the fight again last week, *Boxing News* had Franco winning 8-3-1 in rounds.

Soon after the fight, Ioka was ordered to defend his WBO belt against



countryman Junto Nakatani, but instead opted to face Franco again, explaining the mandatory defence was "not an option at all... it was very important to settle things with Franco". That's to be admired.

Ioka vacated the title before the Nakatani fight went to purse bids.

There's always the possibility that, given the knowhow he's accumulated in more than a decade fighting at the top level and with Ismael Salas in his corner, Ioka can find a way to turn the tables on the 27-year-old from San Antonio, the elder brother of flyweight boss Jesse Rodriguez. We shouldn't forget how some wise old fighters, like Azumah Nelson after a contentious draw with Jeff Fenech in 1991, can make amends in rematches.

After all, Ioka didn't look like an old fighter against Franco, just a smaller one. Furthermore, he was competitive throughout; unhurried, he wasted little, and looked so smooth when he put his punches together. But he simply couldn't make much of an impression on Franco and though Ioka didn't always take clean punches when under fire, spending too much time on the ropes is a risky strategy in a distance fight.

Regardless of how pundits read that first battle, the scorecards show Ioka only has to do a bit more to win this time.

Ioka has avenged one of the other defeats on his 29-2-1 record, to Donnie Nietes, last July. The Filipino went into that rematch aged 40, but in Franco, Ioka faces a fresh, young boxer who's a good size for 115lbs and can fight at a good pace for the full 12 rounds.

As is to be expected, Ioka claims he underperformed in their first fight, yet it shouldn't be forgotten that the same might well be true of Franco. He had been out of

the ring for 16 months going into the fight. Franco had been

waiting for a shot at Juan Francisco Estrada and the Mexican veteran's name came up again in the aftermath of the draw with Ioka.

Franco, who has previously had trilogies with both Oscar Negrete (two draws and a points win) and Andrew Moloney (two points wins and a no

decision), instead heads back to Japan, where we believe he will outwork the local hero and get his rewards on the scorecards this time.

**THE VERDICT** A fascinating rematch in which you can envisage both men making adjustments after fight one.



# World rankings

In conjunction with the Transnational Boxing Rankings. As of June 19, 2023

## HEAVYWEIGHT

No weight limit

Champion: **OLEKSANDR USYK**

1. **Tyson Fury**
2. **Deontay Wilder**
3. **Anthony Joshua**
4. **Andy Ruiz Jnr**
5. **Zhilei Zhang**
6. **Joe Joyce**
7. **Dillian Whyte**
8. **Otto Wallin**
9. **Luis Ortiz**
10. **Joseph Parker**

## CRUISERWEIGHT

200lbs/14st 4lbs

Champion: **JAI OPETAIA**

1. **Mairis Briedis**
2. **Chris Billam-Smith**
3. **Badou Jack**
4. **Richard Riakporhe**
5. **Aleksei Papin**
6. **Lawrence Okolie**
7. **Yuniel Dorticos**
8. **Ilunga Makabu**
9. **Mateusz Masternak**
10. **Arsen Goulamirian**

## LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT

175lbs/12st 7lbs

Champion: **ARTUR BETERBIEV**

1. **Dmitry Bivol**
2. **Joshua Buatsi**
3. **Callum Smith**
4. **Joe Smith Jnr**
5. **Gilberto Ramirez**
6. **Anthony Yarde**
7. **Dan Azeez**
8. **Igor Mikhalkin**
9. **Michael Eifert**
10. **Ali Izmailov**

## SUPER-MIDDLEWEIGHT

168lbs/12st

Champion: **CANELO ÁLVAREZ**

1. **David Benavidez**
2. **Christian Mbilli**
3. **Caleb Plant**
4. **David Morrell**
5. **John Ryder**
6. **Pavel Silyagin**
7. **Carlos Gongora**
8. **Demetrius Andrade**
9. **Vladimir Shishkin**
10. **Eric Bazinyan**

## MIDDLEWEIGHT

160lbs/11st 6lbs

Champion: **Open**

1. **Gennady Golovkin**

2. **Carlos Adames**
3. **Liam Smith**
4. **Zhanibek Alimkhanuly**
5. **Erislandy Lara**
6. **Sergiy Derevyanchenko**
7. **Fiodor Czerkaszyn**
8. **Felix Cash**
9. **Esquiva Falcao**
10. **Michael Zerafa**

## SUPER-WELTERWEIGHT

154lbs/11st

Champion: **JERMELL CHARLO**

1. **Tim Tszyu**
2. **Brian Mendoza**
3. **Sebastian Fundora**
4. **Erickson Lubin**
5. **Israil Madrimov**
6. **Michel Soro**
7. **Jesus Ramos**
8. **Liam Smith**
9. **Tony Harrison**
10. **Bakhram Murtazaliev**

## WELTERWEIGHT

147lbs/10st 7lbs

Champion: **Open**

1. **Errol Spence Jnr**
2. **Terence Crawford**
3. **Vergil Ortiz Jnr**
4. **Jaron Ennis**
5. **Eimantas Stanionis**
6. **Cody Crowley**
7. **Roiman Villa**
8. **Alexis Rocha**
9. **Souleymane Cissokho**
10. **Rashidi Ellis**

## SUPER-LIGHTWEIGHT

140lbs/10st

Champion: **TEOFIMO LOPEZ**

1. **Regis Prograis**
2. **Jose Carlos Ramirez**
3. **Arnold Barboza Jnr**
4. **Jack Catterall**
5. **Josh Taylor**
6. **Subriel Matias**
7. **Jose Zepeda**
8. **Gary Antuanne Russell**
9. **Gabriel Gollaz Valenzuela**
10. **Steve Spark**

## LIGHTWEIGHT

135lbs/9st 9lbs

Champion: **DEVIN HANEY**

1. **Gervonta Davis**
2. **Vasily Lomachenko**
3. **Shakur Stevenson**
4. **William Zepeda**
5. **Frank Martin**

6. **Isaac Cruz**
7. **George Kambosos Jnr**
8. **Ryan Garcia**
9. **Raymond Muratella**
10. **Jamaine Ortiz**

## SUPER-FEATHERWEIGHT

130lbs/9st 4lbs

Champion: **Open**

1. **Oscar Valdez**
2. **Joe Cordina**
3. **Hector Garcia**
4. **O'Shaquie Foster**
5. **Shavkatdzhon Rakhimov**
6. **Roger Gutierrez**
7. **Lamont Roach**
8. **Robson Conceicao**
9. **Emanuel Navarrete**
10. **Kenichi Ogawa**

## FEATHERWEIGHT

126lbs/9st

Champion: **Open**

1. **Luis Alberto Lopez**
2. **Leigh Wood**
3. **Rey Vargas**
4. **Mauricio Lara**
5. **Brandon Figueroa**
6. **Mark Magsayo**
7. **Josh Warrington**
8. **Robeisy Ramirez**
9. **Reiya Abe**
10. **Raymond Ford**

## SUPER-BANTAMWEIGHT

122lbs/8st 10lbs

Champion: **Open**

1. **Stephen Fulton**
2. **Marlon Tapales**
3. **Luis Nery**
4. **Murodjon Akhmadaliev**
5. **Sam Goodman**
6. **Ra'eese Aleem**
7. **John Riel Casimero**
8. **Azat Hovannisyan**
9. **Kevin Gonzalez**
10. **Liam Davies**

## BANTAMWEIGHT

118lbs/8st 6lbs

Champion: **Open**

1. **Emmanuel Rodriguez**
2. **Jason Moloney**
3. **Nonito Donaire**
4. **Takuma Inoue**
5. **Gary Antonio Russell**
6. **Vincent Astrolabio**
7. **Alexandro Santiago**
8. **Keita Kurihara**

9. **Ryosuke Nishida**
10. **Paul Butler**

## SUPER-FLYWEIGHT

115lbs/8st 3lbs

Champion: **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**

1. **Roman Gonzalez**
2. **Kazuto Ioka**
3. **Joshua Franco**
4. **Fernando Martinez**
5. **Junto Nakatani**
6. **Srisaket Sor Rungvisai**
7. **Kosei Tanaka**
8. **Donnie Nietes**
9. **Pedro Guevara**
10. **Andrew Moloney**

## FLYWEIGHT

112lbs/8st

Champion: **Open**

1. **Sunny Edwards**
2. **Artem Dalakian**
3. **Julio Cesar Martinez**
4. **Jesse Rodriguez**
5. **David Jimenez**
6. **Ricardo Sandoval**
7. **Angel Ayala**
8. **Seigo Yuri Akui**
9. **Taku Kuwahara**
10. **Felix Alvarado**

## LIGHT-FLYWEIGHT

108lbs/7st 10lbs

Champion: **KENSHIRO TERAJI**

1. **Jonathan Gonzalez**
2. **Masamichi Yabuki**
3. **Hekkie Budler**
4. **Carlos Canizales**
5. **Sivenathi Nontshinga**
6. **Daniel Matellon**
7. **Elwin Soto**
8. **Regie Sukanob**
9. **Mario Gutierrez**
10. **Nhlanhla Tyirha**

## STRAWWEIGHT

105lbs/7st 7lbs

Champion: **Open**

1. **Knockout CP Freshmart**
2. **Petchmanee CP Freshmart**
3. **Oscar Collazo**
4. **Ginjiro Shigeoka**
5. **Wanheng Meenayothin**
6. **Daniel Valladares**
7. **Melvin Jerusalem**
8. **Rene Mark Cuarto**
9. **Yudai Shigeoka**
10. **Masataka Taniguchi**



# AMATEUR SCENE

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**BETTER VARIETY:**  
Trowbridge enjoys  
a revenge win  
at 54kgs



Haringey Box Cup delivers the action, writes **Daniel Herbert** from ringside

🇬🇧 MUSWELL HILL

JUNE 18

**T**HE 2023 edition of the Haringey Box Cup concluded with 60 finals across three rings at Alexandra Palace, providing so much action that it was hard to keep up.

Early on in the day was an intriguing 54kgs clash between Hoddesdon southpaw **Ellis Trowbridge** and **Daniel Jackson** of Barnard Castle. In late 2021 they had met at the MTK Box Cup, when it was stopped on an injury and Jackson got the points decision.

This time Trowbridge triumphed unanimously to help Hoddesdon win the Best Club trophy. (Best Team went to Ireland Males).

Round one saw Jackson looking sharp with his right cross, while Trowbridge worked behind his jab, moving in and out. As the bout wore on, Ellis' faster hands and feet put him on top, with his better variety becoming apparent in the last. Jackson made him work all the way, though.

Best Male Elite boxer was Dale Youth's **Lucas Roehrig**, a unanimous winner over **Faolan Rahill** (Dublin City University) at 86kgs.

Roehrig has enjoyed a busy season, losing in the NACs final to long-time nemesis Oladimeji Shittu but then beating him in the Tri-Nations and winning the Capital Cup a week before Haringey.

That was all at 80kgs, but coach Mick Delaney revealed Lucas (still only 19) had decided to move up so he could eat properly – he scaled 83kgs for this one.

Having extra energy did him no harm, as he repelled the stern challenge of Rahill, an experienced campaigner who holds a Haringey win over another Dale boxer in Tino Bellott (kept out of this edition by injury).

Solidly built Rahill bloodied Roehrig's nose in the first, but he had to take a standing count in round two as the Dale boxer made his accuracy tell. The last saw non-stop action, with Roehrig's left-rights catching the eye.

No doubts about that decision, but I thought there was an unlucky Irish loser in **Patryk Adamus** at 57kgs against **Hassan Ishaq** of Lucky Gloves.

## Revenge for Ellis





Adamus (Irish Athletic Third-level) was shorter and more powerfully built, but boxed and moved smartly as Ishaq advanced. Adamus did particularly well in round two, beating Ishaq to the punch from the outside with rights.

Yet the Slough boxer kept marching forward and at times Adamus let his workrate drop. Perhaps that's what counted against him, as the judges crowned Ishaq via 4-1 decision.

Also winning 4-1 at 57kgs was Sunderland southpaw **Wallace McLeod**, who produced a fine display of boxing on the back foot to defeat Ireland's **Donagh Keary** (Rathfriland).

In round two a right made McLeod stumble for a standing count, but by the last he was back in his groove, landing solid left hands to clinch victory.

A quality contest at 60kgs saw West Ham southpaw **Freddie Pullen** prevail over Peacock's **Louix Goodman**. The unanimous verdict was correct, but Goodman made Pullen work.

Louix came out fast, connecting with two right crosses early on – a punch he would enjoy success with throughout the contest. But gradually the stylish Pullen settled down and found his rhythm to control things from range, also outlanding Goodman when the Peacock boxer did get inside. A crunching right hook in the last proved the icing on the cake for Pullen.

Watching at ringside was Pullen's clubmate **Connor Mitchell**, who had just won his own final, unanimously beating

**TEAM WORK:**  
**Freddie Pullen and**  
**Connor Mitchell won**  
**for West Ham**

**Sean Tyndall** (Docklands) at Youth 57kgs.

Starting the show's second half, after the interval, was a fascinating 63.5kgs contest between **Lennon Skeggs** (Gemini) and **Ossama Mohamed** of Lions.

Mohamed missed out on the NACs after a controversial club show defeat, but won gold here on a unanimous decision after a tough fight.

Tall and upright, Skeggs boxed stylishly in the opener, scoring well with jabs. Mohamed wisely upped his aggression in round two, bloodying his opponent's nose as he took the fight inside, which suited him better.

Both gave it everything they had in the last, but Mohamed scored with good left-rights late on to swing it his way.

Last year, Repton southpaw **Adeji Adegbola** made a splash winning Haringey gold at super-heavyweight, but for this year's event he moved down a weight to 92kgs – and triumphed again.

He came out swinging and was met head-on by **Ibi Ekineh** (Finchley) in a first session so entertaining that fans watching action in the other two rings turned around to watch.

It was a question of who would break first, and that proved to be Ekineh. He was down late in round one, then again in the second. When a marauding Adegbola connected again with hard shots to bring a standing count, it was all over for an rsc 2.

Finchley had better luck with a big man in **Jesse Olupitan**, who seven days earlier

had won the Capital Cup event a few miles away in Barnet. This time, Olupitan worked hard to take a unanimous decision over Ireland's **William McCartan** (Erne), who took all the punches coming his way but couldn't generate much offence of his own.

Finchley coach Sean Murphy was pleased with the progress of Olupitan, a 24-year-old with 16 bouts to his name (eight this season). Worth noting, too, that Olupitan had to box a quarter-final on the Friday, making the final his third bout of the weekend (and 'only' McCartan's second).

In complete contrast, size-wise, was the women's 50kgs decider between **Terri Naylor** (Limehouse Boxing Academy) and **Madi Gittens** (Yorksire). There was never much between them, with both landing good shots in a hard bout. A thumping right from Naylor in round two was the most notable blow, and she got home 4-1.

Best Female Elite prize went to Finchley's **Patricia Mbata**, who beat Team Ireland's **Shauna Kearney** at 75kgs.

A close women's contest at 70kgs saw **Caitlin Kelly** from the Antonine club in Scotland press effectively to edge taller **Lucy Kisielewska** (Army) via 3-2 points decision.

Another 3-2 verdict went to **Ben Collins** (BCB) against Earlsfield's **Omar Augustine** after a gruelling 80kgs battle. Augustine applied the pressure throughout and it seemed that two public warnings for holding (one in round two, one in the last) given to Collins had decided the matter. But the judges plumped 3-2 for Collins.

In a 75kgs Youth bout, **Chrissaz Mendez** (Yorkshire) steamed into **Nathan Barrett**, only for the longer-limbed Powerday Hooks boxer to move around and pick him off often enough to triumph 4-1 on points.

Going into the closing seconds, the 86kgs final between **Sam Littlechild** (Second City) and **Hasnan Ali** (ELBA) appeared in the balance: these two compactly built types had slammed away enthusiastically from the opening bell, looking to knock out the other with every blow.

But about 15 seconds from the final bell, Ali got the better of a prolonged exchange – and was rewarded with 3-2 points win.

Best Male Youth was **John Tom Varey** (Box Smart Elite), who beat Dagenham's **Billy Macey** at 48 kgs, while Best female Youth was 54 kgs gold medallist **Nancy Shepherd** of Kent Gloves, who beat **Esther Lambe** (Setanta BA).



# Just capital

**TOP TEN:**  
Islington had a double-digit success in Barnet

🇬🇧 BARNET

JUNE 10-11

T

HE inaugural Capital Cup proved a success, with this new event held at the Unitas Youth Zone in Barnet over the weekend of June

10-11. (Four overflow semi-finals took place at the White Hart Lane gym on June 9).

Organised by the WHL and East London Boxing Academy clubs, the event complemented the following week's established Haringey Box Cup with development action plus women, youths and open-class elites.

One of Islington's 10 winners was lightweight **Joseph Burton**, who showed his improvement in stopping **Kieran Keen** (Repton) in the third round.

Keen advanced throughout but proved too easy to hit as Burton countered accurately. A right floored Keen in round one and a combination brought him a count in round two. When he was dropped again in the last, he was counted and then stopped, protesting but shaky.

ELBA's **Sam Fazil** is a known puncher but was on the receiving end against **Cillam Mills** (Renegades) at 75kgs Group A. Tall Mills boxed neatly in the first before, in round two, he hurt Fazil with a combination. A follow-up right dropped Sam heavily and the referee waved it off.

ELBA had better luck with wins for elites **Uzair Maqbool** (57kgs), **Hamza Hajee** (60kgs) and **Hasnan Ali** (86kgs),



**Daniel Herbert**  
reports from a  
successful new  
event

albeit with varying degrees of difficulty.

Dale Youth's tall, slim **Callum McCarthy** moved around but couldn't keep marauding Maqbool off him. McCarthy took two counts and it was stopped before the end of round one.

Southpaw Hajee used his height and reach advantages for a unanimous win over **Bobby Mullally**. The Yeading boxer tried his best, but picked up a public warning for low head in the first and another for the same foul in the third. All the while, Hamza piled up the points with his left hand.

Ali, the recent London finalist at 92kgs, prevailed on a 3-2 split after a gruelling battle with the RAF's **Luke Selby-Grace**.

Each had his moments, with things getting messy enough in round two for both to be given a warning. Taller Selby-Grace really took the fight to Ali in the last, and the verdict did not please the RAF coaches.

Possibly the best bout of the day was the 63.5kgs Group A affair that saw Finchley's popular **Ross Driscoll** beat **Taran Singh** of Hoddesdon. Singh tried to use mobility and long punches, but Driscoll pressed non-stop and sealed the deal when a right-hander brought Singh a standing count in the last.

As recently as the end of April, **Sean Davies** was losing the Welsh 63.5kgs final

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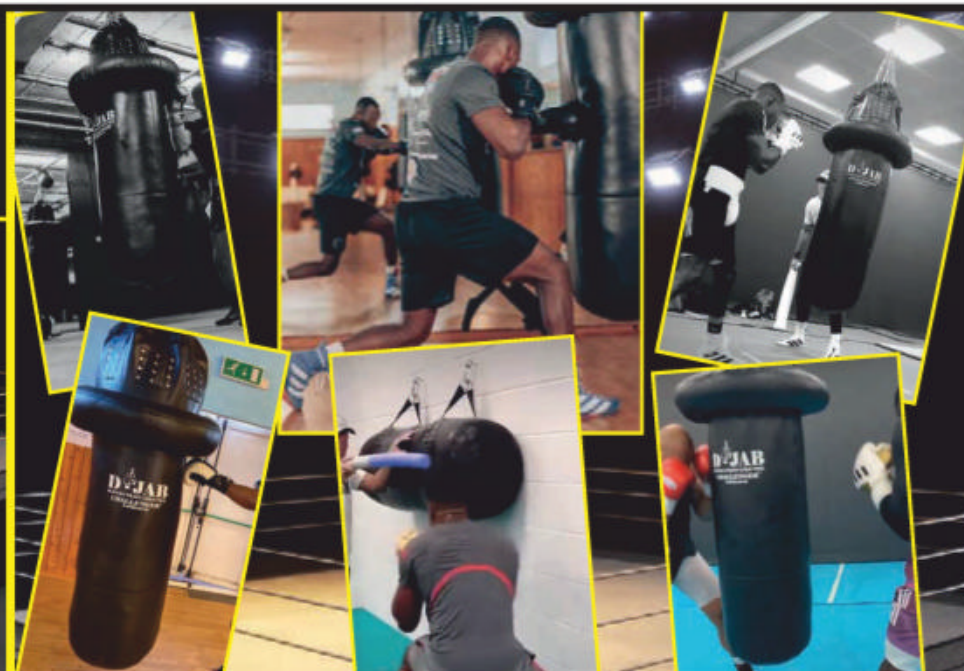
Conventional industry mass produced upper cut bags simply doesn't allow the motion to create the upper cut to perfection. Not only is the Dutch Sam bag a great choice for competitive fighters, it is also ideal for recreational usage. It is strong, firm and easy to use, making it a great choice for everyone.

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If you have any questions or would like to learn more about Dutch Sam bag, which is named after the pugilism artist of 1775-1816 who introduced us to the rear upper-cut, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would be more than happy to provide you with the information you need to make an informed decision.

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# NEW STAR

Bibby's Tri Nations win caps a 12-month purple patch that has seen him emerge as one to watch in Scotland

**HEAVYWEIGHT:**  
**Olupitan** [behind the belt]  
made a big impression



when with the Dyffryn outfit. Now in his first tournament for Islington – still at the same weight – the stocky Davies edged taller **Desharn Fearon** on a 4-1 split. This was in Group B.

(Because nobody could box more than twice over the weekend, and because some weights had more than four entries, certain weights were split into more than one group).

There was a worrying conclusion to the 71kgs Group A final between **Rio Gordon** (Harwich) and Islington's 2022 Commonwealth Games rep **Yusuf Deen Kargbo**.

Kargbo was raw but strong, while Gordon, who lost in the NACs quarters to eventual champion Callum Makin, showed more quality. The Essex boxer looked to have forged ahead when, in round three, Kargbo was sent crashing down on his back in centre ring.

It was immediately waved over, with the doctor and paramedics tending to him. Kargbo was given oxygen and after several minutes was able to rise, wobbling as he was helped to sit on a stool before being able to leave the ring.

Impressing for Islington at 71kgs

Group B was southpaw **Tyrese Ramsey**, who proved too slick for **Zayn Khan**.

The Stonebridge boxer marched forward, but Ramsey moved well and beat him to the punch for a unanimous win. Ramsey had beaten Khan in the quarter-finals of the London Championships in March, en route to reaching the national last eight.

Dale Youth's **Lucas Roehrig**, who last month finally beat Oladimeji Shittu at the sixth attempt to win the Tri-Nations,

added Capital Cup 80kgs gold with a win over **Charlie Roche** (Halstead). Roche gave Jimmy Sains a decent fight in the November 2021 London Championships – but that was at 75kgs. At this heavier weight, he struggled to make much impression against the taller, longer-armed Roehrig, who

outboxed him for three minutes before Roche retired in the interval between rounds one and two.

Finchley have a history of turning out big men in recent years, and **Jesse Olupitan** could be the latest. The well-muscled southpaw showed potential as he forced matters effectively to beat **Brian Muwenge** from All Stars unanimously in the 92+kgs final.

**FINCHLEY HAVE  
A HISTORY  
OF TURNING  
OUT BIG MEN.  
OLUPITAN COULD  
BE THE LATEST**

SCOTTISH light-welterweight **Luke Bibby** has had a purple patch over the last 12 months.

His victory over **Daniel Walshe** in the final of the Tri Nations Championship in Rotherham last month was his 10th in his Past 11 bouts. That golden run includes a win over **Enrico Lacruz** in a Scotland-Holland match in Amsterdam in April.

Lacruz had boxed at both the 2016 and 2020 Olympics, but found Bibby too sharp.

"To beat him in his backyard was special," said the 23-year-old southpaw from Perth Railway ABC. "It proved to me where I'm at. I knew I was at that level and I showed it. I pressed the action with my feet and outboxed him."

Bibby is slick, but as he proved against Walshe in the Tri Nations final, he can win fights by getting his head on his opponent's chest as well.

He said: "I have found my style over the last 12 months. I know I'm incredibly fit and my short- and mid-range boxing is phenomenal. I've been working hard in the gym, fighting to my strengths and it's paying off."

"I'm hard to beat. They come to fight me and find

they can't and if they try to box at range they find I'm really good at boxing."

Bibby had his first bout aged 15.

"People always said I had natural talent," he said, "but I worked really hard and never gave up. I had bad days, but I stuck at it."

"I played football. I was a running machine and gave it my all every time. I wanted a sport where there was no one to blame apart from myself if I lost. I tried boxing. No one in my family had ever done it before. I just decided to give it a try and got addicted to it."

Forty-nine bouts later and Bibby is one of the new stars of Scottish boxing.

"There must be something in the water," he said. "We have a good set-up and I work as a plumber for my dad, so he gives me as much time off as I need. I train at the High Performance Centre in Glasgow four times a week."

"I'm looking to get more international experience. I want as much as I can. I think I've proved I'm above domestic level."

Bibby says his success has inspired others in his home town.

"The gym has always been busy," he said, "and I think I've started a bit of a revival. They look up to me."



**PROSPECT:** Bibby credits his success to hard work as much as talent



# When Jock conquered the U.S.

McAvoy's reputation for being a poor traveller ended when he arrived in America



**Miles Templeton**

Boxing historian

**F**OR ANYONE interested in the British boxing scene back in the 1920s and 1930s, they could do no better than read two books, both of which are exceptional in their portrayal of not only the domestic scene at that time, but provide some context on how the sport was viewed in society in general. There is much in them to surprise the modern reader.

The first book, *Born To Box*, is written by a long-time contributor to this column, Alex Daley, and it tells the remarkable story of his grandfather, Nipper Pat Daly. The second, *The Rochdale Thunderbolt*, is equally good on the story of Jock McAvoy. Written by ex-manager and promoter, Jack Doughty, it tells the story of boxing in and around Rochdale from the mid-1920s and contains some wonderful action photos of the young lads, mainly from the Lancashire mill towns, who fought in the open air at Royton Stadium, just a few miles from Rochdale.

Jock McAvoy is one of Britain's most formidable fighters. He held the British middleweight title between 1933 and 1934 before winning the light-heavyweight version in 1937. He was a terrific puncher and a wild man in the ring. On the way up, from 1927 onwards,

McAvoy wore down most of his domestic opponents, and there were some real hard men among them, by simply walking through them prior to delivering the pay-off punch. A very high percentage of his victories were achieved by clean knockout, and he soon became a top-liner at Belle Vue, Manchester, where, alongside stablemates Jackie Brown and Johnny King, he formed one-third of the triumvirate of Manchester boxers that made the city the provincial capital of the sport in the mid-1930s.

Jock had a reputation for performing at his best when in front of his home fans and it was thought that he didn't travel particularly well. In January 1935, for instance, he went to Paris to fight Marcel Thil for the European middleweight title and he was beaten on points over 15. He then had three contests at Belle Vue against a Spaniard, an Aussie and a Frenchman, and he licked all three. When he left for America, in the autumn of that year, not a lot was expected from him. He was matched with Al McCoy, a tough light-heavyweight who had won 21 on the trot, many inside the distance. BN was correct in stating that while they did not know much about the American, "We may feel pretty sure that McCoy must be a useful performer,

as it does not usually happen that a British champion is given anything easy for his American debut."

The following week's headline was, therefore, most welcome: "How McAvoy mastered McCoy: British middleweight champion makes a great hit at Madison Square Garden."

The American fans took to Jock immediately. The pre-fight underdog, his two-handed punching delighted the onlookers and he twice dumped McCoy on to the seat of his pants for short counts. The decision in his favour was unanimous and the promoters wasted no time matching him with Eddie Babe Risko three weeks later. This time Jock really took the place by storm as he sensationally hammered his rival in less than a round.

Britain had produced a long line of champions who had failed to make it in the States, with many of them performing poorly, so Jock's feats delighted not only the Americans, but also the legions of fight fans over here who knew that the best of our lads were a match for anyone.

Jock missed out in his world title challenge with John Henry Lewis the following year, again at Madison Square Garden, but his story is a good one and Doughty's book tells it beautifully.

**'A BRITISH CHAMPION RARELY GETS AN EASY U.S. DEBUT'**

## A LOT OF LOVE FOR KENNY

EBA's line up to pay tribute to the memory of the great Buchanan



**Simon Euan-Smith**

simonoldtimers@gmail.com

EBA correspondent

THE late Ken Buchanan was one of Britain's finest boxers of the 20th century, so it's natural that several EBAs pay tribute to him in their recent newsletters.

Ken was Scottish and proud of it, and not surprisingly there's a comprehensive piece in the Scottish EBA's newsletter. I quote: "[Scotland] has been blessed by gifted boxers who have taken on the world and given it a bloody nose. Buchanan certainly was the best."

Few would argue with that.

The piece records how Buchanan shared a Madison Square Garden dressing room with Muhammad Ali in December 1970, when Ali stopped Oscar Bonavena in 15 rounds and Buchanan gave away weight and outclassed unbeaten Canadian Donato Paduano over 10. (The meeting with Ali was the start of a friendship that lasted up to Ali's death.)

At that time, British fighters weren't that highly regarded across the Atlantic, so it was a terrific achievement when the Americans voted Ken Fighter of the Year for 1970 (that September, he had shocked Ismael Laguna to take his world lightweight title in San Juan).

SEBA were delighted to welcome Ken's son, Raymond, at their June meeting.

Ken is also the subject of a huge, in-depth article in the Central (Midlands) EBA's newsletter, with many quotes. I liked his summing-up: "I've had a good kick of the ball. I had no axes to grind, none whatever. I've lived my life and that's it."

Not everyone can say that.

The SEBA newsletter also records the passing of Andy Wyper, a fine Scottish amateur who couldn't quite hit the heights as a pro (though he amassed a

respectable 14-5-1 pro record). Andy won the ABA light-middleweight title in 1963 and beat Italy's future European light-middleweight champion Remo Golfarini in an international match.

My condolences to Andy's family and friends.

Welsh EBA Secretary Wynford Jones contacted me to say that at their recent AGM the officers were re-elected en bloc, as follows:

**President:** Eddie Avoth

**Chairman:** Kevin Hayde

**Vice-Chairman and Secretary:**

Wynford Jones. Email: jonesw13@sky.com

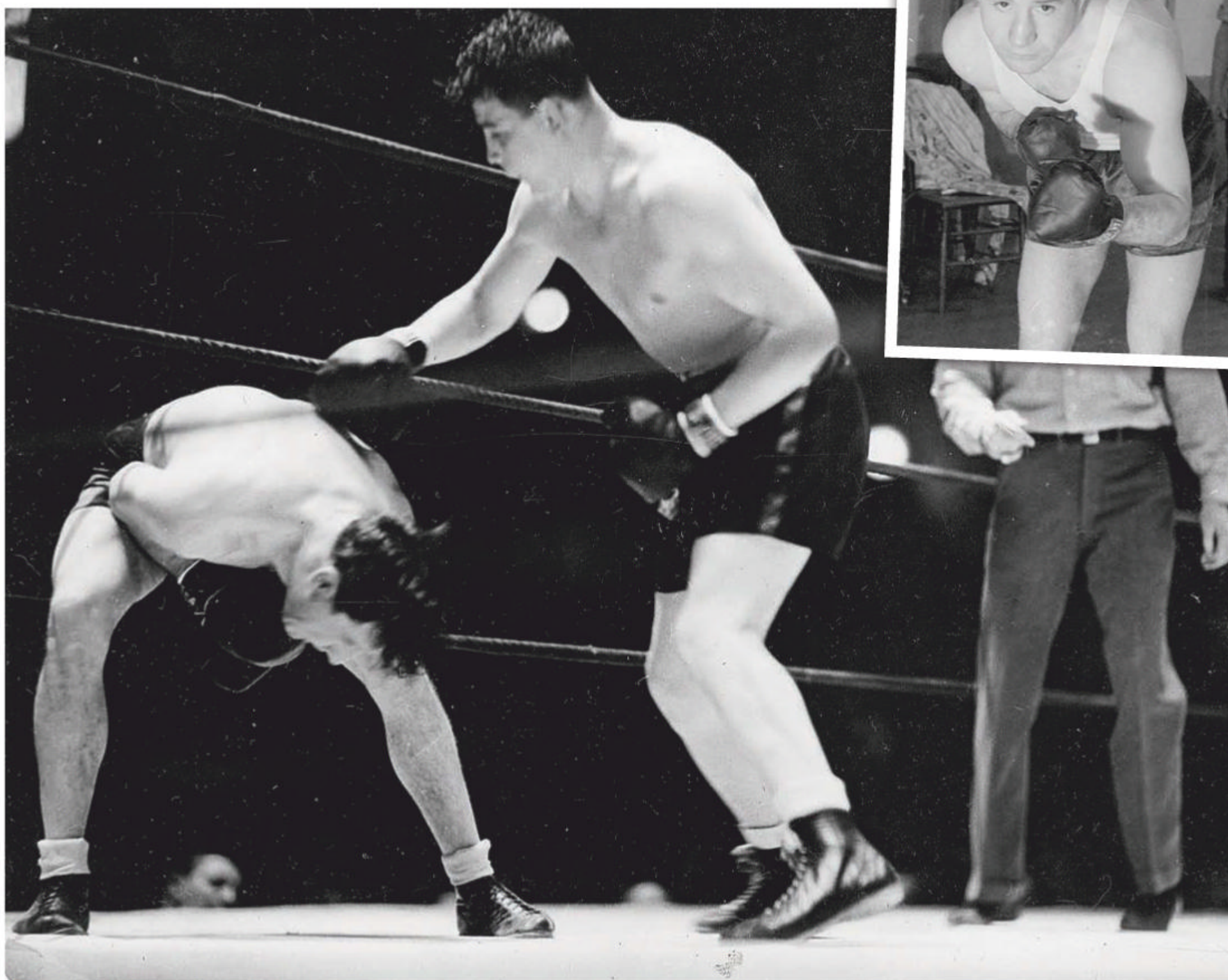
**Treasurer:** Cyril Thomas.

Avoth, of course, is a former British and Commonwealth light-heavyweight champion.

Wynford goes on to say that Wales



**REVERSAL OF FORM:**  
Favoured American Al McCoy attacks  
Jock McAvoy but will find himself on  
the canvas twice and a points loser



**FLOWER OF SCOTLAND:**  
Buchanan is regarded  
by many as his nation's  
best-ever boxer

will once again be holding their Annual Reunion at the Servicemen's Club in Cardiff Road, Taffs. It will be on Sunday, September 3, and will begin at non. This is always a good event and I hope it's well attended. It's so good these events are taking place again after Covid stopped so much. We can't afford to be complacent, but things have definitely improved.

And on that point, I was delighted to hear from Bournemouth EBA Secretary Mike Hinton that Bournemouth were able to hold their amateur boxing awards this year for the first time since 2019.

The Junior trophy went to Lilly Simmons (Arena) and the Senior to Will Gardiner (Parkstone). The awards, for the best boxers in the Bournemouth/Poole area, are selected by the members.

Bournemouth started these awards in 2013 at the instigation of present

Chairman (and former pro heavyweight) Dave Fry, and Mike tells me that in 2013 the first Senior trophy winner was Chris Billam-Smith - who, of course, has just won the WBO cruiserweight title, dethroning unbeaten defending belt-holder Lawrence Okolie at Bournemouth's Vitality Stadium. I'm sure there was a good EBA contingent in the audience.

I keep stressing the need for EBAs to show they care about today's scene, and are not just about reminiscing about the past - and attending shows, and instigating these trophies, are excellent ways of doing this. I remember Ipswich EBA also gave out annual trophies, and I'd regularly see members at London shows where a local was appearing. Ipswich sadly is no more, but it did a lot of good in its time, and is still remembered.



# TORI-ELLIS WILLETTS

Andrew Fairley talks to a former member of the GB podium squad

## When and why you started boxing:

I started kickboxing from the age of 11 and went on to reach the highest level and represent GB. But kickboxing wasn't in the Olympics and I wanted to achieve more, so I transferred to boxing at 18 years to see how far I could get.

## Favourite all-time fighter:

Floyd Mayweather – he's just so slick. Offence and defence, he's levels above any fighter.

## Best fight you've seen:

Sam Eggington-Frankie Gavin live was crazy. Sam is always an entertainer, and it was a Birmingham rivalry, so the atmosphere was incredible!

## Personal career highlight:

Representing Great Britain on the Olympic Podium squad, as well as winning the Elite Nationals twice.

## Toughest opponent:

Russia's Elena Savelyeva in my first major, the Europeans Championships. Even though I boxed really well and only lost on a split, she was highly experienced in comparison to me at the time.

## Best and worst attributes as a boxer:

My engine is my special weapon; my workrate is next level. Weakness? Maybe not resting enough, but I think I'm managing it a lot better now.

## Training tip:

Just keep going!

## Favourite meal/restaurant:

I have a sweet tooth for desserts, so pancakes, cheesecake and ice cream are my favourite things. But if we're talking a meal, Caribbean food is my go-to.

## Best friends in boxing:

I have a few good friends from GB: Paige Murney, Hannah Robinson,



## FAST FACTS

**Age:** 28 **Twitter:** @ToriellisW **Height:** 5ft 3ins **Nationality:** English  
**From:** Birmingham **Stance:** Orthodox **Record:** 1-0 **Division:** Bantamweight  
**Next fight:** After winning her pro debut in May, Willetts is hoping to double her win record before the summer is out.

Shona, Kerry – they're my girls and always will be!

## Which other athlete would you like to be:

I love sport, so I'd be happy with any, but probably a track athlete.

## Last film/TV show you saw:

*Creed III*.

## Who would play you in a film of your life:

Michelle Rodriguez from *Fast & Furious*; people say I look like her, and she is badass!

## Have you ever been starstruck:

Yes, when I got invited to a Katie Taylor Gymshark event and met her. She's an inspiration for so many females in boxing and she is so down to earth, it's unreal.

## Last time you cried:

When my sister was crying and gave me a hug after my debut fight when I said it was for my nan and niece.

## Best advice received:

Make sure you have a team around you that you trust and has your back from the start.

## Something not many people know about you:

I have five brothers and one sister.

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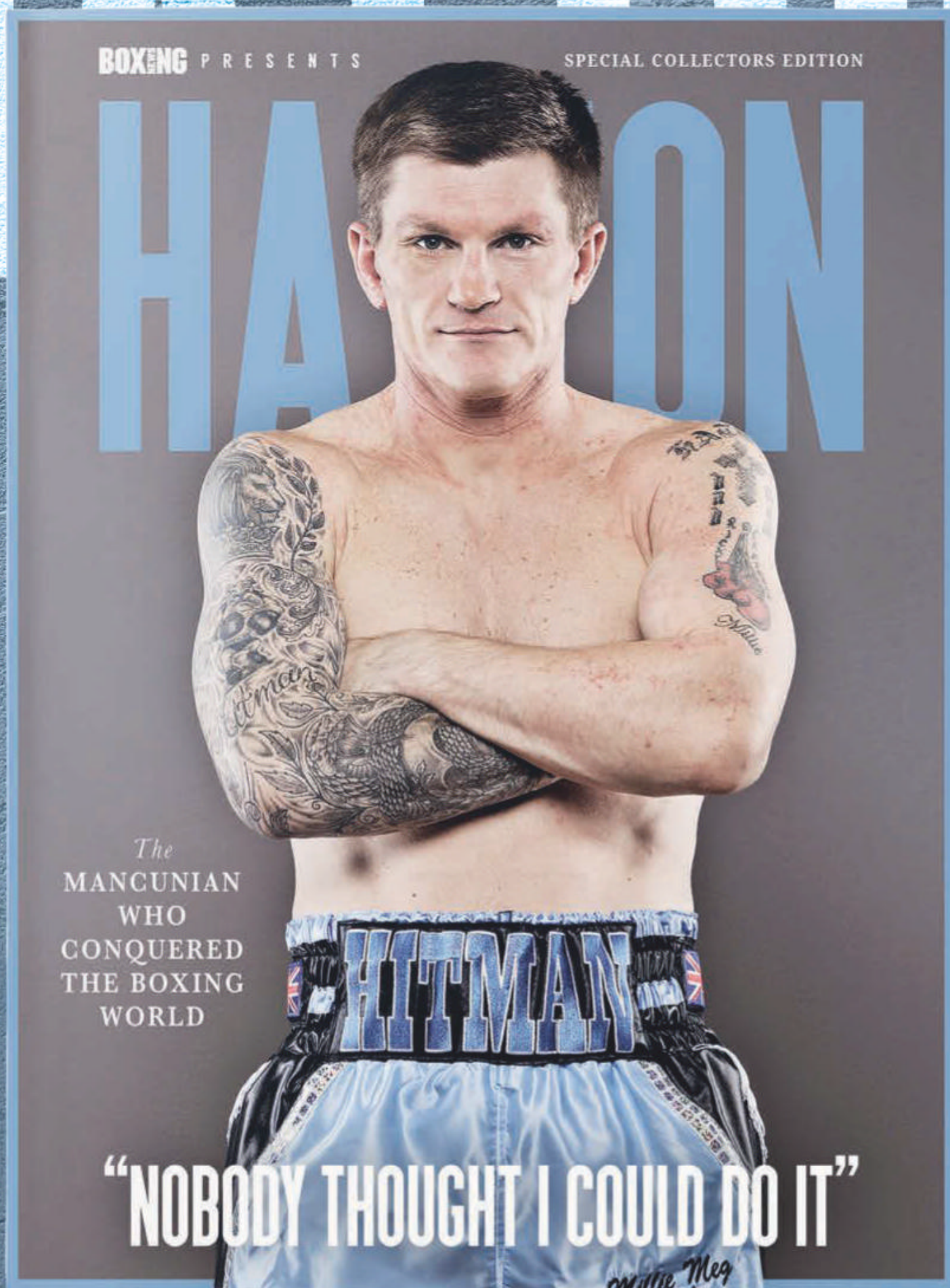
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